

**KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM:
History of 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery
in the Vietnam War
1968 – 1969**



John M. Trowbridge

2010

*This book is dedicated to the members of
2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery:
Past, Present and future.*

Cover photograph: *Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, on Hill 88, March 1969.* U.S. Army Photograph.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

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I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. John Rose, the current artist of Snuffy Smith, and the folks at King Features Syndicate for the updated rendering of “Snuffy.”

2D BN, 138TH ARTY



While conducting research for this book, I located a copy of the ORLL (Operational Report – Lessons Learned) for 1 May – 31 July 1969, on the cover of the document was a drawing of King Features Syndicate’s Snuffy Smith. I was unable to identify the artist of the artwork on the ORLL, so I contacted King Features and told them of the 2/138th’s connection to Snuffy, they in-turn put me in touch with Mr. Rose who graciously did an updated version of Snuffy.



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Illustrations/Photographs courtesy of the following:

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery – Collection located at the Lexington National Guard Armory. From the family of Robert W. Cundiff, John B. Gross, Jr., Harold O. Loy, James H. Morris, Jr., Roger A. “Moon” Mullins, and Larry W. Tomlinson.

Service Battery – Collection located at the Lexington National Guard Armory. Julius L. “Bud” Berthold, Hubert W. Elkins, and Rich Hanna.

A Battery – Collection located at the Carrollton National Guard Armory. Kenton County Public Library – Northern Kentucky Photographic Archives. Robert L. Bailey and the family of Walter R. Wood.

B Battery – From the family of Ross T. Cotton, Gary D. Ford, Floyd Jennings, James W. O’Keefe, Joel D. Scott, and Tom Birdsong who was infused into B Battery.

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Additional Sources – Collection of the Kentucky Military Records and Research Branch, Frankfort. WAVE-3 TV “Legion of the Brave” video documentary. Members of 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile): “Bucky”, Dale “Hannibal” Hansen, Dave “Hawk” Wayne, and Tom “Ranger Tom” Carpenter. Mr. Gordon Blaker and the staff at the US Army Artillery Museum, Fort Sill, Oklahoma for photographs of “Charlie 22.”

INTRODUCTION

Kentucky National Guard during the Vietnam War

The year 2009 marked the 40th Anniversary of the return to the Bluegrass from Vietnam following a 12-month tour of duty for the men of the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, Kentucky Army National Guard.

On 19 April 1968, the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery with units in Louisville, Bardstown, Elizabethtown and Carrollton, Kentucky were ordered to active duty by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Among 24,500 men ordered to active duty in 88 units across the United States were 570 Kentucky Guardsmen and 750 Kentucky Air Guardsmen.¹

After approximately three weeks of processing, the Army Guardsmen were flown to Fort Hood, Texas, for concentrated field training and combat qualification. Following the heritage, which had been passed down through the generations of the Kentucky National Guard, these men performed their duties with the utmost of expertise. These were civilian soldiers taken from their civilian jobs to perform the task of liberating from Communist tyranny a tiny country practically on the other side of the world. Even though such was quite unpopular with many U.S. citizens, these centurions carried the torch of freedom for posterity. During the months before deployment to the Republic of Vietnam, 105 men sought an injunction from shipping the unit to a hostile zone without a declaration of war by the U. S. Congress. The U. S. Supreme Court refused to issue the injunction. These men had their day to be heard and never once complained of being sent to Southeast Asia. Not one man failed to do his duty commendably.

The Kentucky men showed much spirit. This was indicated by their disregard for a Department of Defense policy, which disallowed two brothers serving together in a combat zone. The 2nd Battalion had numerous pairs of brothers serving in combat, as well as many who had brothers serving with the U.S. Regulars in South Vietnam. Such concern truly brought out the inbred motto of Kentuckians, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall."

The 2nd Battalion of the 138th Field Artillery established headquarters at Gia Le Combat Base. Its firing batteries occupied such famous bases as Fire Base Anzio, Bastogne, Tomahawk, and Hill 88. Its responsibility was to provide fire support for the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division, whose home is Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Together they were to keep North

¹ Earlier in the year, on 26 January 1968, the Pueblo Crisis off the coast of North Korea precipitated the recall to federal service of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing at Shewmaker Air National Guard Base in Louisville. Wing Headquarters and an enlarged 165th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron were moved to Richards Gebaur Air Force Base near Kansas City, Missouri, in July 1968.

During this call-up, the 123rd units flew approximately 20,000 tactical flying hours and delivered almost 320,000 reconnaissance prints to requesting agencies. The command was deployed on important missions to the Panama Canal Zone, the Alaskan Air Command and to Itazuke Air Base, Japan. Assigned personnel served on active duty for 16 months and returned to state service on 8 June 1969. Performance during that period attained the unit its first Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA).

Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars from destroying neighboring villages that were located along the China Sea. In this endeavor the Kentucky National Guard had provided such superior fire support that NVA sappers, demolition experts, were given the life-or-death mission of completely destroying Charlie Battery of Bardstown. Charlie Battery had created utter destruction for the NVA and the only possible hope was an attempt to destroy her. Later intelligence indicated that the NVA had practiced their mission of destruction because it was well aware of Charlie Battery's battle adeptness.

The evening of 19 June 1969, was a quiet one for Charlie Battery on Tomahawk Hill. There had been few attacks by the enemy in the previous days and fire missions were at a minimum. It was pouring rain. South Vietnamese rainstorms are much different from those in the States. It comes down with such force that one would think a dam had broken. The rain numbs all hearing senses and limits visibility to one foot. The infiltrators are pleased with such climate as it allows them movement, which normally would be checked. Many of the off-duty men of Charlie were watching a James Bond movie or thinking about their loved ones back in Kentucky.

Meanwhile, approximately 150 NVA sappers were amassing outside the perimeter of the compound. Twenty-two infantrymen from the 101st Airborne Division were manning the perimeter. At approximately 0145 hours approximately 75 of the sappers, clad only in loin cloths and skullcaps with satchel charges strapped to their bodies and carrying RPG's, shoulder-firing rocket launchers, proceeded to snake through the barbed concertina wire barricade. Supported by a mortar unit the NVA sappers completely overran the defending infantry, killing and wounding most of them.

A Bardstown man shouted the first alarm and the destruction was on. The deadly sappers, who were, as would be later confirmed, on drugs, moved around devilishly free with no fear of death. They threw satchel charges into the bunkers, killing and wounding many. The wounded as well as the unharmed fought back with every ounce of life to drive the madmen from the firebase. At the same time, other units of the Kentucky Guard at other firebases were shelled by the NVA so that they could provide little or no fire for Charlie Battery.

The sappers delivered approximately 150 satchel charges and RPG's. After destroying an ammunition storage area, three howitzers, nine bunkers, the mess hall, dining tent, maintenance building, four ammunition carriers, three 2 ½-ton trucks, two ¾-ton trucks, and three jeeps, the marauders of the night were forced to retreat. Cobra gunships zeroed in on the NVA position and forced the surviving NVA sappers to run for their lives.

There were nine Kentucky casualties on the battlefield, but 23 of the enemy were killed. Other dead were carried off by the enemy so as not to allow the Kentuckians the satisfaction of knowing they had stopped the NVA's attempted goal: total destruction of Fire Base Tomahawk. The Kentuckians took one prisoner, from which they learned much so that no such attack could occur again.²

² After-Action Report – Attack on FB TOMAHAWK, dated 7 July 1969, Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery.

Senior Commander in Vietnam, General Creighton Abrams, said the 2nd Battalion 138th Field Artillery, was "one of the best trained, and absolutely the best maintained battalion-sized unit in Vietnam."³

Meanwhile, back in Kentucky, on 27 May 1968, 700 Guardsmen were ordered to Louisville to quell a racial riot as state and local police fought late into the night to restore order after rioting and looting erupted in the city's West End. Six units from Louisville were originally called to curb the disturbance. Seventeen incidents of burning automobiles, looting of stores and vandalism had occurred before the Guard established its headquarters at Brandeis Elementary School. The mission of the Guardsmen was to protect firemen who were attempting to extinguish fires initiated by arsonists. There were a total of 29 incidents of looting, vandalism, and arson in the 90-minute period after the command post was set up.

The rioting centered around 28th and Greenwood. It was there that the action began at 8:30 p.m. following a rally protesting reinstatement of a Louisville policeman accused of using excessive force in arresting an African-American on May 8. The rioting fanned out for blocks as gangs of African-American youths roamed the streets. The price tag for the disturbance was pegged at \$200,000. The cost of maintaining the Guard for the period was estimated from \$30,000 to \$40,000 per day.

In October of 1969 a welcome home ceremony was held for the returning 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery from Vietnam. Members of the Guard stood proudly in honoring its achievements. The spring of 1970 was a violent one. President Richard M. Nixon had committed troops into the fishhook of Cambodia in order to check North Vietnamese supply lines and rest camps, which had been used as springboards for campaigns against the allied forces. Back home in the U.S., the college campuses were humming with dissatisfaction as evidenced by the numerous campus disorders. The powder, which set the explosion, was the incident at Kent State University in Ohio. Four students had been accidentally struck and killed by bullets, which allegedly came from the muzzles of Ohio Guardsmen. This incident created chaos on many of the college campuses throughout the U.S. The University of Kentucky also had its problems. On the night of 5 May, Governor Louie B. Nunn issued an emergency proclamation after witnessing the destruction of the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) Building. Two hundred eighty-five Guardsmen were called to aid in the protection of state property and human life. On 7 May, 1000 student protesters were dispersed by tear gas for failure to break up an unlawful assembly. Such was a distasteful task for the Guard for many of the men were students at the University themselves. Yet they performed outstandingly in keeping peace on the campus without a major incident. After four days the Guardsmen had settled all chaos and had kept the University intact for the citizen taxpayers of the Commonwealth.

Approximately 125,000 Kentuckians served in the Vietnam War. One thousand seventy-seven gave their lives. In the 1960s Nelson County, Kentucky (Bardstown), had a total

³ See Chapter 4, *Back to the Bluegrass* for addition recognition received by the battalion.

AMERICA'S VIETNAM WAR TIMELINE: 1954-1975

1954

The Geneva Accords ends Indochina War between France and Vietminh.⁴

1955

United States military advisors take over training of South Vietnamese military from the French.

1958

North Vietnamese directed guerrilla war intensifies against government of South Vietnam.

1960

North Vietnam announces formation of National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) committed to victory over the government of South Vietnam.

1961

Kennedy Administration decides to increase military and economic aid to South Vietnam and raises the number of military advisors from 685 to several thousand.

1963

President Diem is killed in an army coup. President John F. Kennedy is assassinated; Lyndon B. Johnson becomes President of the United States.

1964

The United States pledges continued assistance to South Vietnam to control "Communist aggression"; warnings to North Vietnam are issued. In response to North Vietnamese attack in the Gulf of Tonkin, Congress passes "Tonkin Gulf Resolution" supporting measures to protect United States forces and "prevent further aggression."

1965

Marines land in South Vietnam to defend the U. S. airbase at Da Nang. President Johnson announces draft increase to allow buildup of U. S. forces in Vietnam from 75,000 to 125, 000, with more troops as needed.

1966

U. S. forces increase scope of ground operations throughout Vietnam. U. S. troop level increases to 385, 300.

1967

President Johnson raises U. S. forces in South Vietnam to 525,000. U. S. Commander in Vietnam, General William Westmoreland, warns Washington of impending major effort of enemy.

⁴ The 1954 Geneva Accords divided the Southeast Asia country of Vietnam into North and South Vietnam.

1968

A major offensive against cities is launched by the Communists during Tet cease-fire. President Johnson declares partial bombing halt, calls for peace talks with North Vietnam, and announces he will not run for reelection.

1969

President Richard M. Nixon wins presidency, announces beginning of troop withdrawals, and shifts war-fighting responsibility to South Vietnamese government. U. S. forces peaked at 536,100.

1970

United States – South Vietnamese forces attack North Vietnamese bases in Cambodia. U. S. force strength falls below 400,000 for the first time since 1967. Pacification program scores major gains in South Vietnamese countryside.

1971

South Vietnamese troops, with U. S. air support, attack North Vietnamese bases in southern Laos. Further U. S. withdrawals and peace negotiations in Paris continue.

1972

U. S. declares indefinite suspension of Paris peace talks. North Vietnamese launch massive tank-led “Easter offensive.” U. S. responds with revived bombing of North Vietnam and mining of North Vietnam’s ports. In December, bombing of the North intensifies in an effort to get the North Vietnamese back to the conference table.

1973

President Nixon announces Accord on ending the war in Vietnam; cease-fire begins 27 January, and U. S. prisoners of war are released. U. S. Secretary of State and representatives of North and South Vietnam and Viet Cong sign peace pacts in Paris. The longest war, to date in U. S. history ends.

1974

U. S. Senate rejects Administration request for \$266 million in additional military aid to South Vietnam.

1975

Republic of Vietnam falls to massive North Vietnamese tank and infantry assault.

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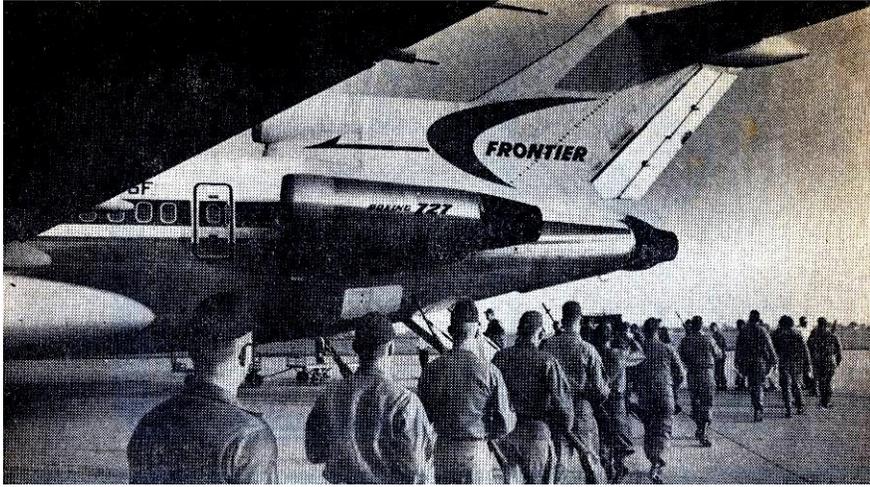


*Coy Miller (left) drilling
A Battery, at Carrollton
National Guard Armory.*

Processing Alpha Battery personnel at the Carrollton National Guard Armory



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery personnel boarding plane at Staniford Field for flight to Fort Hood, Texas.



Chapter Two THE TRAIN-UP

Training: Accelerated training of the battalion was initiated on 27 May 1968, at Fort Hood, Texas. In a period of four months the battalion transitioned to the MTOE, successfully completing basic unit and advance unit phases of training, and satisfactorily completed the technical proficiency inspection by U. S. Continental Army Command.

Arrival at Fort Hood, Texas

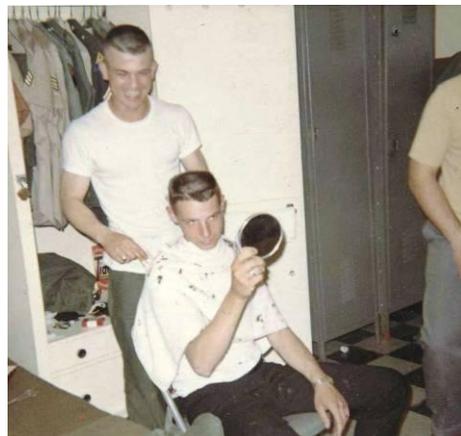


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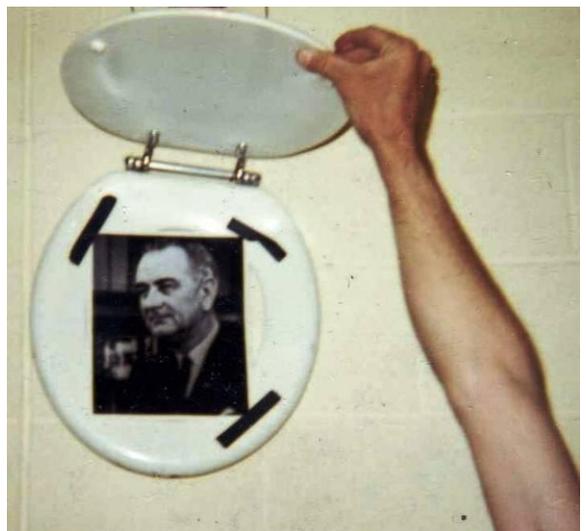
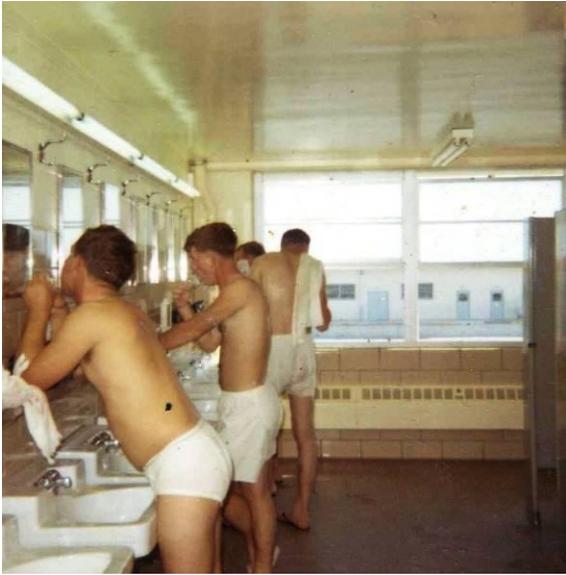


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In the Barracks and Around Post



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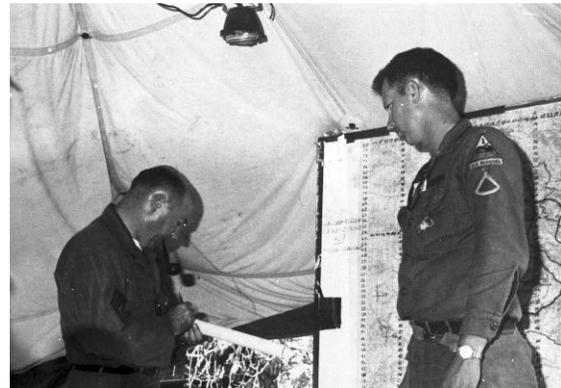


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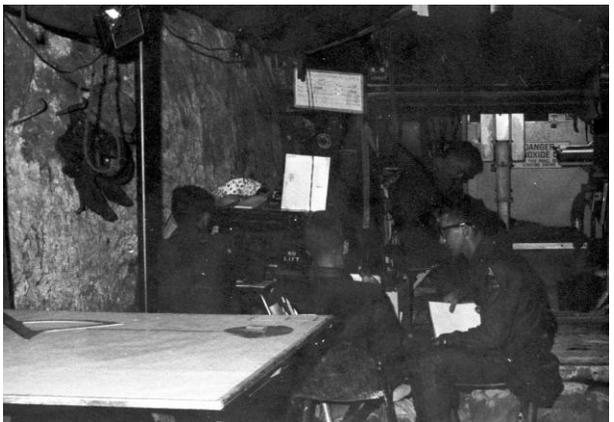
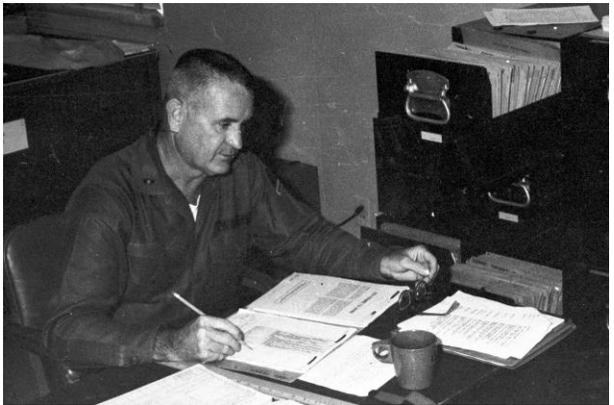


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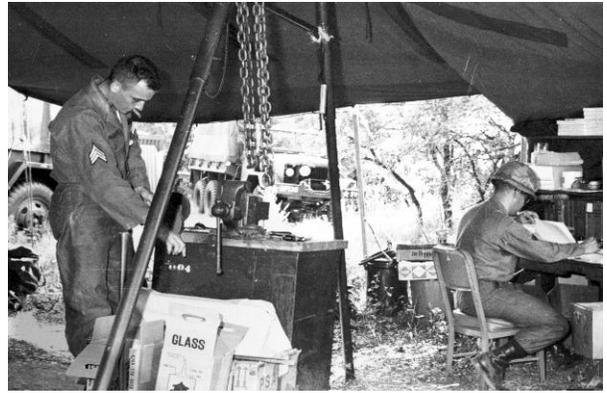
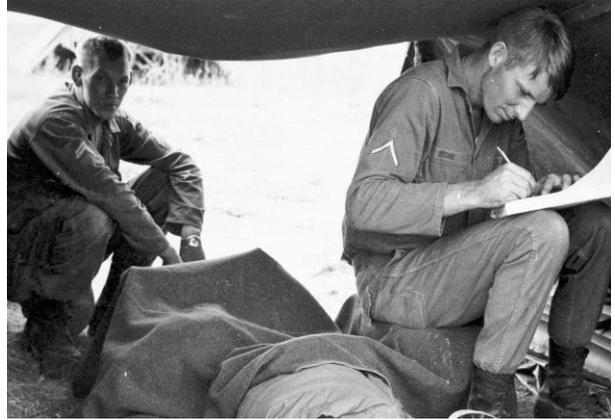
In the Field



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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



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LTC Robert W. Cundiff presents a representation of the battalion crest to MG John K. Boles, Jr., commander, 1st Armored Division. The print was hung in the Old Ironsides Conference Room at Fort Hood, Texas. U. S. Army photograph.



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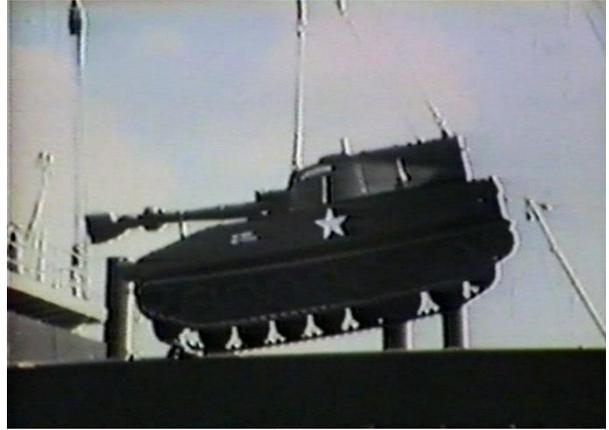
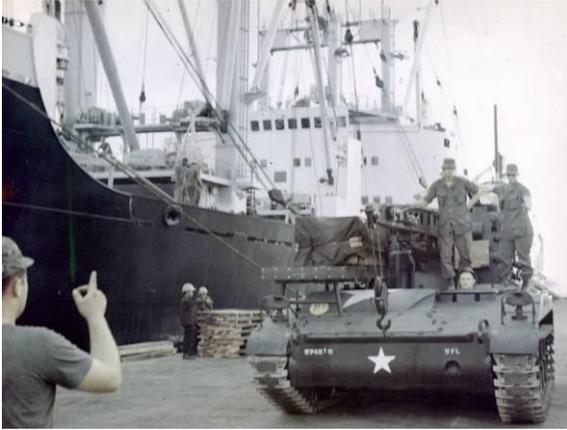
Preparation and Movement to Vietnam



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Chapter Three **IN-COUNTRY**

*Here I am in this wartorn land,
This place is known as Vietnam,
It's the coldest and darkest of nights
and the word is already down
That we'll have to fight,
then, I thought, God, how can it be
Will this war really make 'em free?
Then all at once I heard a terrifying sigh,
and there he was before my eyes.
He was my buddy from the other hill
I could tell you his name . . .
but you wouldn't know him still.
He was a guy like you and I,
and came here, sure, but not to die.
When I looked at his face to say a prayer,
I saw a trace of gray in his hair . . .
Oh, God, it must have scared him so
to see before him his own life unfold.
Friends and neighbors, I ask you please
When you pray to our land, our God,
Remember me, but especially guys like these.*

David A. Unseld.⁶

⁶ David Unseld went with C Battery to Vietnam, he was infused with a Regular Army unit prior to the attack on FSB Tomahawk.

Operational Reports for 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery in Vietnam



Deployment: Advanced elements of the battalion departed Fort Hood, Texas on 11 October 1968. The final elements of the organization arrived in-country on 30 October. The battalion was assigned to XXIV Corps and in thirteen days was fully operational. On 13 November 1968, at 1400 hours, Brigadier General Allan G. Pixton, XXIV Corps Artillery Commander, pulled the lanyard on Number 3 piece, Battery A, and fired the first 2/138th Field Artillery round into the mountain range south of Phu Bai, Vietnam.

Operations: During the tour in Vietnam, the battalion had a primary mission of reinforcing the fires of the 101st Airborne Air Mobile (AM) Division Artillery and frequently supported the 1st Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Division and RF, PF units. During the period, 2/138th Field Artillery Battalion fired approximately 150,000 rounds and participated in the following major operations:

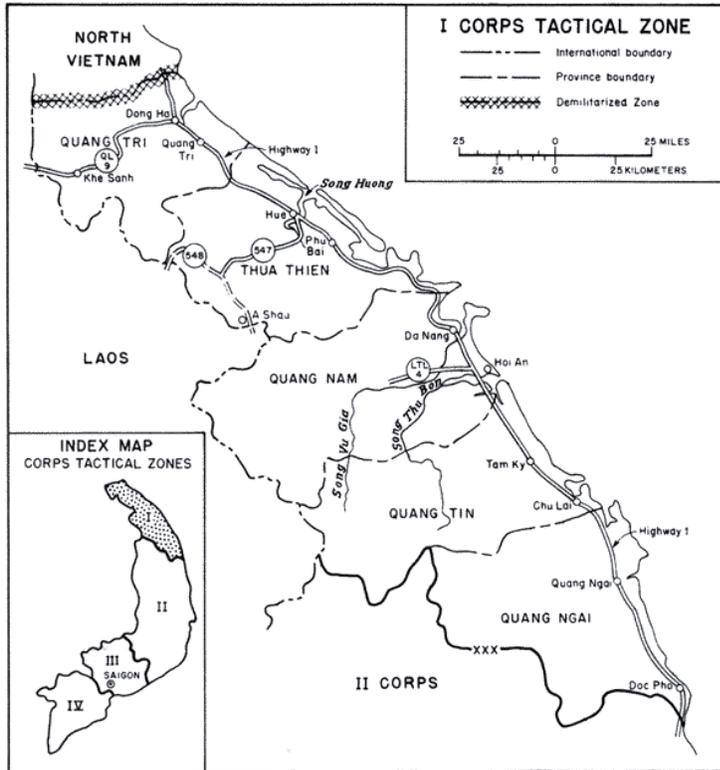
NEVADA EAGLE, KENTUCKY JUMPER, BRISTOL BOOTS, RICHLAND SQUARE, and CAMPBELL STREAMER.

Operational Report Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery for the Period Ending 31 January 1969.

Section 1, Operations: Significant Activities.

The Battalion completed all pre-deployment training at Ft Hood, Texas on 6 September 1968. Although some preparation for loading had started prior to this date all equipment was packed and loaded on rail cars by 16 September 1968 which was the previously assigned Equipment Shipment Readiness Date. All personnel received leaves, some started on 7 September 1968 and the remainder going 16 September 1968. The majority of the leaves were for 30 days. The advanced party consisting of 12 Officers and 40 Enlisted Men (EM), including

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the Battalion Commander, selected staff officers and Battery Commanders, departed Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas with minimum essential equipment on 11 October 1968 and arrived in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) 13 October 1968. This units host battalion, 1st Battalion, 83rd Artillery, billeted the advance party and immediately initiated required in-country training and provided staff assistance on operations and procedures peculiar to Vietnam. The first element of the main body arrived on 26 October 1968 with the entire battalion closing in the Republic of Vietnam on 30 October 1968. Strength of the battalion upon arrival was 36

Officers, 3 Warrant Officers and 487 Enlisted Men. Headquarters Battery, C and Service Batteries staged at Gia Le Combat Base and A and B Batteries at Phu Bai, for initial in-country training. Minimum essential equipment arrived by cargo aircraft on 29 October 1968 with the remainder of equipment arriving at Da Nang, RVN, on 30 October 1968, on the cargo ship Mayo Lykes. Wheel vehicles were de-processed at Da Nang and driven north to unit staging areas via Highway 1. Total mileage traveled was 70 miles with no incidents. Track vehicles (M109's, M548's and M577's) and conex containers were transported by LST from Da Nang to Tam My. Track vehicles were then driven to staging areas. The next five days were spent in unloading equipment, building bunkers and setting up housekeeping facilities, followed by two days of formal training conducted on mandatory subjects. Fire Support Bases were occupied by the three firing batteries following construction of howitzer positions and dry run artillery fire was begun. Firing batteries were registered on 13 November 1968 and began firing into enemy territory the same date. The Commanding General, XXIV Corps Artillery, and the Battalion Commander, pulled the lanyard firing the first two rounds of the battalion in Vietnam. Three days later the Commanding General, XXIV Corps, Lieutenant General R. G. Stillwell, certified the battalion combat ready.

Operational Report Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery for the Period Ending 30 April 1969.

Section 1, Operations: Significant Activities.

The battalion continued, during this reporting period, to perform its assigned mission in a satisfactory manner. The three firing batteries were widely dispersed with each battery reinforcing a separate direct support artillery battalion in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Mobile). Problems were encountered by the battalion support elements attempting to provide adequate support simultaneously to all firing batteries. One battery during the reporting period was located in an area accessible to track vehicles only. All classes of supply had to be transported by track vehicles which necessitated the consolidation of M548's from two batteries. As of the end of this reporting period fully track vehicle resupply is being accomplished to one of the firing batteries.

On 24 April 1969, Lieutenant Colonel Glenn D. Spradlin assumed command of the battalion. At the time of the change of command the battalion was well into the infusion program.⁷ In March, 77 enlisted men were infused with the Americal Division at Chu Lai and in April, 31 enlisted men were infused with the 108th Artillery Group at Dong Ha. During this quarter 36 enlisted men were gained through pipeline replacements. The above headquarters furnished this battalion, individuals with comparable MOS and grades, in most cases, and with different DEROS months. The infusion program will continue with the 108th Artillery Group through 15 May 1969, then, normal pipeline replacements will complete the infusion by 15 July 1969. By this date the battalion will have approximately 20% of the original personnel that deployed with the unit in October 1968. In most cases, the infused personnel have done a good job. However, only a small percentage of the infused personnel had ever seen a self-propelled M109 Howitzer. Because of this, our maintenance and training program has required new emphasis. During this quarter 10 officers have also been infused and by the end of July only 1 Major, 4 Captains, and 4 Lieutenants of the original group that deployed in October 1968 will remain in the battalion.

During this quarter, the battalion reached the time limit for Service Awards. The battalion policy is that every man is considered for an award. During this period 13 awards were

⁷ "In early 1969, the S1, S2, S4, and the Headquarters Battery commander were promoted to major and transferred to corps and corps artillery. The infusion program was started in earnest upon completion of six months in country. We were grateful for the opportunity to perform as a team during the six month period and establish what we feel to be an enviable record. Some men were hard to convince of the need to infuse and were very strong in their plea to stay together. Needless to say, the program was carried out. The Commander of the Battalion when mobilized in May 1968 retained that title through the CONUS training phase and in RVN from 10 October 1968 through April 1969. He was assigned XXIV Corps Artillery Operations Officer during the remaining months. In late June 1969, about 120 members of the deployed strength remained in the 2/138th. Persons transferred out of the battalion ended up in every major unit in RVN. In essence, scattered from the Delta to the DMZ. In late September 1969, the original members of the battalion were assembled at Phu Bai. On 10 October, the 2/138th Guardsmen with colors departed Vietnam for Fort Knox, Kentucky and demobilization." Reference, letter, dated 20 December 1972, Headquarters XXIII Corps Artillery, to DA, Office of Reserve Components.

given for Service, Achievement and Valor. Each individual that has been infused has been considered and appropriate recommendations have been forwarded to their gaining unit.

In the area of Civil Affairs the battalion surgeon became actively involved in the MEDCAP program in the city of Hue. During this reporting period the battalion surgeon visited the Hue Provincial Hospital each Monday and Wednesday morning and has treated many Vietnamese patients. He has participated in 10 major surgical operations and numerous procedures, and has treated approximately 150 Vietnamese patients.

Operational Report Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery for the Period Ending 31 July 1969.

Section 1, Operations: Significant Activities.

The battalion engaged in combat support operations during the entire reporting period (92 days). The battalion remained attached to XXIV Corps Artillery with a mission of GSR 101st Airborne Division Artillery.

At approximately 120215H May, Fire Support Base (FSB) Bastogne (YD622096) was attacked with mortars, RPG's (Rocket Propelled Grenade) and small arms fire. An RPG round hit the powder pit of gun 4 of Battery C, 1st Battalion, 83rd Artillery which was collocated on the fire base with Battery A of this battalion. A fire was started which resulted in the detonation of 80 rounds of 175mm projectiles. Final protective fires were fired. A first light sweep of the area produced 30 RPG rounds. During the attack, three men from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery were wounded.

At 0145 hours on 19 June, Battery C located at Fire Support Base Tomahawk (ZD117012), was attacked by a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Sapper unit supported by RPG fire. The enemy used normal sapper tactics by bombarding the Fire Base with RPG's, cutting the perimeter wire and advancing on the position from three directions. The attack lasted approximately two hours. Results of the attack were: 16 NVA KIA, 1 NVA PW; 9 US KIA, 37 US WIA, 4-M109 Howitzers, 3-M548 cargo carriers, 3-2 ½ ton trucks, and 2-¾ ton trucks damaged. Since the attack, that battery position area was moved to higher ground that is more defensible. An after action report was submitted on 7 July 1969.

The infusion program ended during the month of July. Approximately 26% of the original personnel that deployed with the battalion are still present.⁸

There were no Friendly Fire Incidents during the reporting period.

⁸ The Army's Infusion program was established to avoid a heavy reduction in personnel in one unit when the time came for the men to go home. Infusion provided for a slow, steady turnover of personnel. Additionally, in the case of the National Guard, the program helped avoid a heavy loss in one unit from one community in the event the unit was overrun.

Additionally during the battalion's tour of duty in Vietnam the following information is provided:

Judicial incidents:

Summary Courts Martial: 1

Special Courts Martial: 1

Article 15: 38

Rest and Relaxation (R & R) for the men of the battalion:

In Country locations: China Beach, Eagle Beach, Vung Tau.

Out of Country locations: Australia, Bangkok, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Singapore, Taipei, and Tokyo.

Operations Supported by 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery in Vietnam

NEVADA EAGLE

17 May 1968 to 28 Feb 69 – the largest single campaign ever fought by the 101st Airborne Division. This operation was designed to clear and secure the lowlands of Thua Thien province in Northern I Corps and to deny all NVA and VC forces operating in the area the ability to capture the ripening rice crop growing in the rich coastal plain north and south of Hue.

KENTUCKY JUMPER

01 March to 14 August 1969 – 101st Airborne Division, 9th Infantry Division and ARVN 3rd Regiment clear and search operation in Thua Thien Province.

BRISTOL BOOTS

25 April to 15 May 1969 - 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division operation in Ruong Ruong Valley, Thua Thien and Quang Nam Provinces.

CAMPBELL STREAMER

12 July to 15 August 1969 – 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and 2nd Battalion, 502nd Airborne Infantry Regiment clear and search operation in Quang Nam and Thua Thien Provinces. Part of Divisional OPERATION KENTUCKY JUMPER.

RICHLAND SQUARE

14 August to 28 September 1969 – 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and ARVN 3rd Regiment clear and search operation in the A Chau, Da Krong, Valliesin, Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces.

CLAIBORNE CHUTE

15 August to 28 September 1969 – 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. Part of Divisional OPERATION RICHLAND SQUARE.

CUMBERLAND THUNDER

18 August to 28 September 1969 – 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and ARVN 3rd Regiment. Part of Divisional OPERATION RICHLAND SQUARE.

CONFIDENTIAL

2D BN, 138TH ARTY



ORLL 1 MAY - 31 JULY 1969

CONFIDENTIAL

ARTILLERY RAIDS:

Caisson IV

Caisson XI

Caisson XIV



Smoke belches from tube of 155mm howitzer of 2/138th Artillery, as two crewmen outside the self-propelled weapon protect their ears from mighty blast. Kentucky Army National Guard unit has been reinforcing fires of 101st Airborne Division against distant enemy in northern area of South Viet Nam. U. S. Army photograph.

The Fire Support Bases of 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery in Vietnam

Cannon artillery is the only nonorganic fire support serving maneuver forces that is immediately responsive, always available, and totally reliable. It is immediately responsive because it is positioned to be always within range of the supported force, whereas other fire support means most often must be brought to the battle area or moved within range. It is always available because it is organized to provide field artillery in direct support of every committed maneuver force. A maneuver commander may not always receive other fire power because it is apportioned according to the needs of all commanders. It is totally reliable because it can function in any weather and in poor visibility, when helicopters and planes are grounded or their effectiveness is reduced.

Infantry commanders fully appreciated the value of field artillery support. In developing their maneuver plans, they worked closely with their supporting artillery commanders to insure that the plans could be fully supported by the artillery. If plans envisioned that maneuver battalions would be so widely dispersed that they could not be supported by direct support batteries operating from single battery positions, additional artillery was requested. If additional artillery was unavailable, the direct support batteries were split to occupy several positions and thereby increase area coverage even though fire power was reduced. Only on rare occasions did maneuver forces in Vietnam operate beyond the range of friendly artillery.

Use of available mobility allowed direct support artillery to follow supported ground forces virtually anywhere. But once field artillery was displaced to a preplanned position to provide supporting fires, it was extremely vulnerable to the enemy, who could attack in mass from any direction. Firing batteries had neither the personnel nor the expertise to defend their positions against determined enemy attacks. Accordingly, infantry units provided defensive troops. The position jointly occupied by supporting artillery and defending infantry was referred to as a fire base or fire support base. It was commanded by either an infantryman or an artilleryman, usually whoever was the senior. From its fire base an artillery fire unit could shoot in any direction to its maximum range and would answer calls for fire support from maneuver forces operating under its protective umbrella.

The position for a fire base was selected jointly by the artillery and infantry commanders. The primary concern of the artillery commander was that the position be adequate to support maneuver elements throughout the area of operation. An important consideration was the availability of other artillery within range of the position that, if required, could be called on to provide indirect fire in defense of the fire base. Other important considerations were the type of soil to support the howitzers and how readily the position could be defended and supplied by air. The primary concern of the infantry commander was defense of the position unless he intended to establish his headquarters on the fire base to take advantage of the available security. In that event, he was concerned that the fire base be central to his maneuver forces so they could be effectively controlled. This priority was generally agreeable to the artillery commander, who could provide better all-round coverage from such a location.

Because of the manpower drain on maneuver units had they been required to defend all artillery positions, fire bases were constructed almost exclusively for direct support artillery. When such a fire base was established, it was usually to support a large operation of at least divisional size or to provide a position when no available one was even marginally acceptable. Division or field force artillery generally chose the best positions for their firing units not in direct support from among defensive positions already established. As a result, such a unit might

occupy a fire base with one or more other artillery units or, for that matter, might occupy any other type of defensive position belonging to either American or allied forces. Any commander was happy to have the additional fire power that a battery would bring to his position.

The organization of a fire base was a reflection of the flexibility and ingenuity of the American soldier. Terrain, area available, and number and caliber of weapons, plus numerous other variables, made it impossible to standardize procedures for occupying such positions. Still, some generalities can be cited.

The formation of artillery pieces on the ground varied with the terrain and the caliber and number of weapons. Insofar as possible, weapons were arranged in a pattern with as much depth as width to eliminate the need for adjusting the pattern of effects on the ground. Six-gun batteries, which included the Second Battalion's 155-mm. batteries, were emplaced in a star formation, with five guns describing the points of the star and the sixth gun in the center. This configuration provided for an effective pattern of ground bursts and for all-round defense. At night the center piece could effectively fire illumination while the other pieces supported with direct fire.

The infantry established a perimeter as tight as feasible around the guns. The desired configuration was a perfect circle, but this was seldom possible because of the varied terrain to be defended. Perimeter defensive positions were dug in and bunkered where possible. To the front, barbed wire was strung and claymore mines and trip flares were emplaced. Infantry soldiers defended the fire base perimeter with their individual rifles and grenade launchers and with crew-served machine guns and recoilless rifles. In addition, the infantry was equipped with both 81-mm. and 4.2-inch mortars. Mortars were invaluable for fire base defense, not only for their heavy volumes of high-explosive fires but also for close-in illumination during enemy night attacks. A fire base was fortunate if it had air defense weapons on its perimeter. Both the M42A1 "Duster," a dual 40-mm. weapon, and the M55 (quad), four .50 caliber machine guns fired simultaneously, provided impressive ground fires, though neither weapon had been designed for that role. These weapons were organic only to non-divisional air defense battalions and were not available in sufficient numbers to provide protection to all fire bases.

The defense responsibilities of the infantry did not end with the establishment of a strong defensive perimeter. Just as important was aggressive and continuous patrolling around the fire base to frustrate enemy attempts to reconnoiter the base and prepare for an attack. Usually, a single-battery fire base was provided a rifle company to man the perimeter and conduct necessary patrols. This provision was recognized in the organization of infantry battalions in Vietnam, where each battalion was assigned four rifle companies instead of only three.

The field artillery on the fire base also contributed to its defense. In fact, the contribution of the artillery was often the deciding factor in staving off a determined attack. Artillery defensive fires included direct fire, counter-mortar fire, and mutually supporting fire.

Direct fire, as its name implies, required line of sight between weapon and target. It involved the use of special antipersonnel munitions and techniques. The XM546 antipersonnel projectile, called the Beehive round, was particularly effective in the direct fire role. The projectile was filled with over 8,000 flechettes, or small metal darts. The field artillery direct fire capability was integrated with the infantry defense to cover likely avenues of approach and the most vulnerable areas. It was imperative that the infantry bunkers be built up in the rear so that the infantrymen were protected from the effects of the Beehive ammunition.

Another effective direct fire technique was "Killer Junior." The technique was designed to defend fire bases against enemy ground attack and used mechanical time-fused projectiles set

to burst approximately 30 feet off the ground at ranges of 200 to 1,000 meters. The name Killer Junior applied to light and medium artillery (105-mm. and 155-mm.), whereas "Killer Senior" referred to the same system used with the 8-inch howitzer. This technique proved more effective in many instances than direct fire with Beehive ammunition because the enemy could avoid Beehive by lying prone or crawling. Another successful application of the Killer technique was in clearing snipers from around base areas. The name Killer came from the radio call sign of the battalion that perfected the technique. To speed the delivery of fire, the crew of each weapon used a firing table containing the quadrant, fuze settings, and charge appropriate for each range at which direct fire targets could be acquired.

Counter-mortar (or counter-battery) fires, the second type of artillery defensive fire, were preplanned, unobserved fires that were executed in the event the fire base underwent an enemy rocket or mortar attack, either as part of a ground attack or as a "standoff" attack using rocket or mortar fire alone. A field artillery forward observer or liaison officer chose likely positions for enemy weapons from a map and from information provided by aerial reconnaissance. Firing data to the positions were computed and a fire plan was prepared. The fire plan was retained in the battery fire direction center, where it could be executed immediately when requested. This procedure might at first glance appear to depend to a great extent on luck, but it proved to be quite effective. An experienced artilleryman knowing the optimum range of enemy weapons, the likely routes into the area, and the criteria for good weapons positions could be very accurate in predicting future locations of enemy weapons.

Mutually supporting fires, the third type of artillery defensive fire, were indirect fires provided by one fire base in support of another. Whenever a new base was established, field artillery forward observers and liaison officers contacted responsible personnel on other bases within range and made plans to support one another if attacked. Planning included choosing and pre-firing targets close to the defensive perimeter of each fire base. The firing data were retained in the fire direction centers and used when requested. Immediately available close-in fires were thus assured. Subsequent corrections could be made if necessary.

Time and again the indirect fires from mutually supporting artillery proved to be a principal factor in successfully countering an enemy attack on a fire base. Having mutually supporting bases was considered so important that whenever a battery was required to occupy a position beyond the range of any friendly artillery, every effort was made to readjust other artillery positions to bring them within range. If that was not possible, batteries often split into three-gun platoons and occupied two separate but mutually supporting positions.

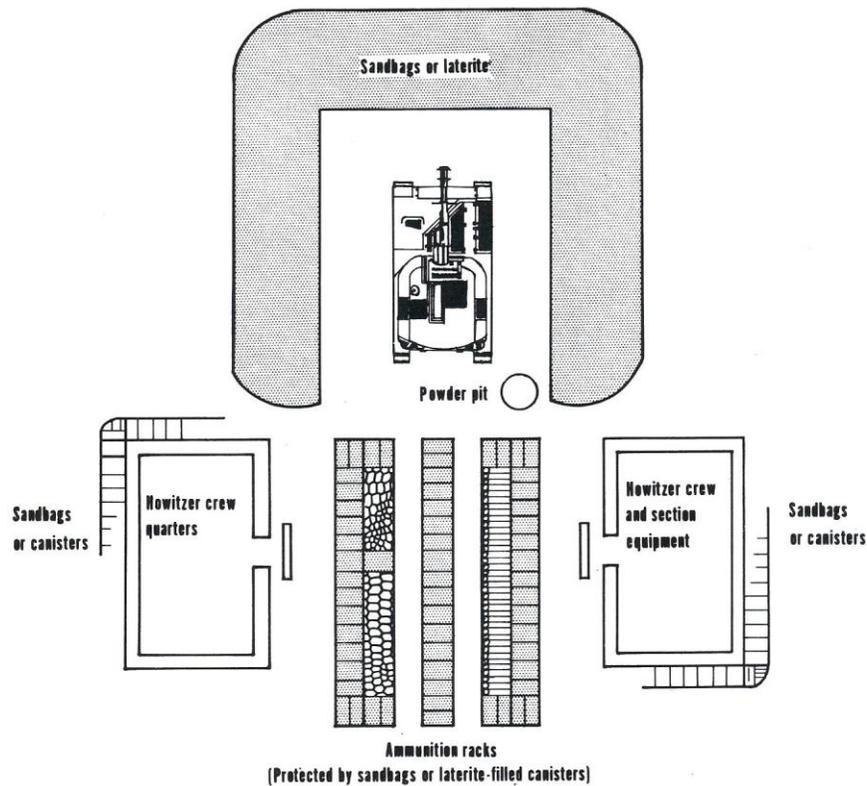
The various designs of individual weapon emplacements constructed by batteries on fire bases reflected a great deal of initiative and individuality. The design normally was standardized within a battalion and, in some cases, throughout a division or group. Whatever the design, it provided for all-round protection of weapons and crews from direct fire, readily available overhead cover for the crews, and protection of ammunition. Common materials used were sandbags, ammunition boxes, powder canisters, pierced-steel planking, heavy timbers, and corrugated steel roofing. Steel culverts covered with sandbags were used to provide hastily constructed, yet effective, personnel cover. Standard cyclone fencing placed 20-25 feet in front of positions protected howitzers, which, with their high silhouettes, were particularly vulnerable to enemy rocket attack.

The 6,400-mil environment required that gun sections be thoroughly versed in techniques to allow weapons to be shifted rapidly to a new direction of fire. Two sets of reference points, which normally consisted of two sets of aiming posts or one set of aiming posts and an infinity

collimator, provided a visible angular reference in any direction. Azimuth markers or stakes around the gun positions provided easy reference and facilitated the frequent shifting of trails from mission to mission.

Central to the firing battery was the fire direction center. This was a small, well-bunkered position. It had the personnel and equipment necessary to receive fire requests from forward observers with the supported force and to convert these requests to data that were usable at the guns. Fire direction centers; too, had to follow new techniques in order to respond to calls for fire from all directions. Firing charts had to allow for a 6,400-mil range of fire, and much experimentation was done in this area to devise the best system. Generally, an oversized firing chart mounted on a large table proved to be the most effective solution.

The fire base proved its worth in Vietnam: it could be quickly constructed virtually anywhere; it could withstand the most formidable assaults that an unsophisticated enemy could bring against it; and it permitted the field artillery to provide fire support of the same high quality as that provided in past wars.⁹

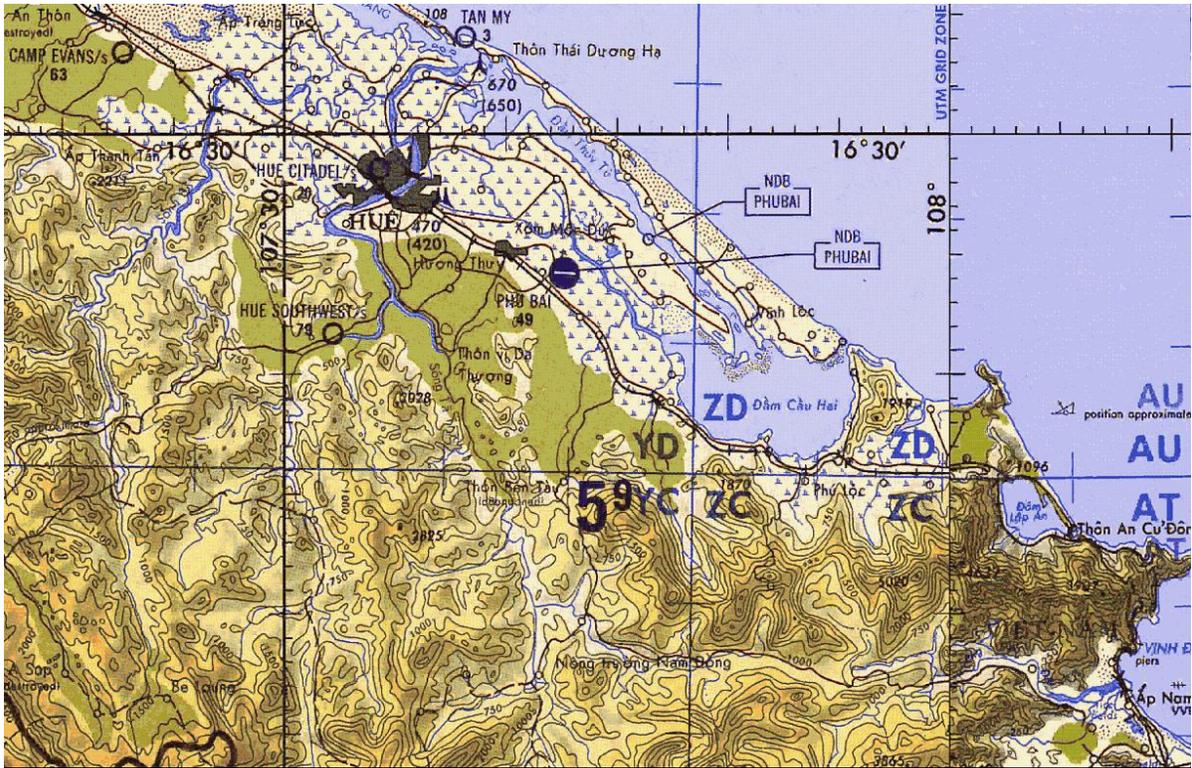


The howitzer parapet was open. The ammunition racks and crew quarters were covered with pierced steel plank and sandbags.

155-mm Howitzer emplacement.

⁹ Text is taken from Ott, *Field Artillery 1954-1973*, pp. 55-72.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



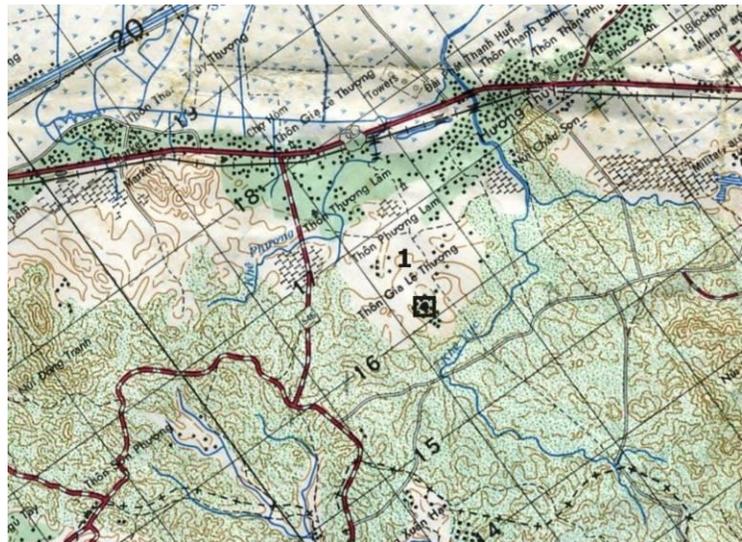
Section of Vietnam Map showing area of operations for 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery.

Combat Bases

1. Gia Le Combat Base

(YD 823162: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps. A.k.a. Camp Wilkinson and FSB Gia Le. Located approximately 12 km SE of the Hue Citadel Air Field, 7 km due west of Phu Bai Air Field and 1 km SE of Camp Eagle.

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery and Service Battery.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

2. Phu Bai/Camp Hochmuth

(YD 885135: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps. Located on the west side of QL-1, directly across highway from Phu Bai Air Field. Marine base camp and Headquarters, 3rd Marine Division. Named in honor of USMC Major General Bruno A. Hochmuth, Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division, killed in action 14 November 1967.



A Battery, B Battery and C Battery.



4. Fire Support Base (FSB) Bastogne

(YD 620095: Reference, map sheet 6441 I, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps. A.k.a. FOB Bastogne and LZ Bastogne. Approximately 15 km WSW of Nam Hoa and 17 km SW Hue along north side of Highway 547.

A Battery.

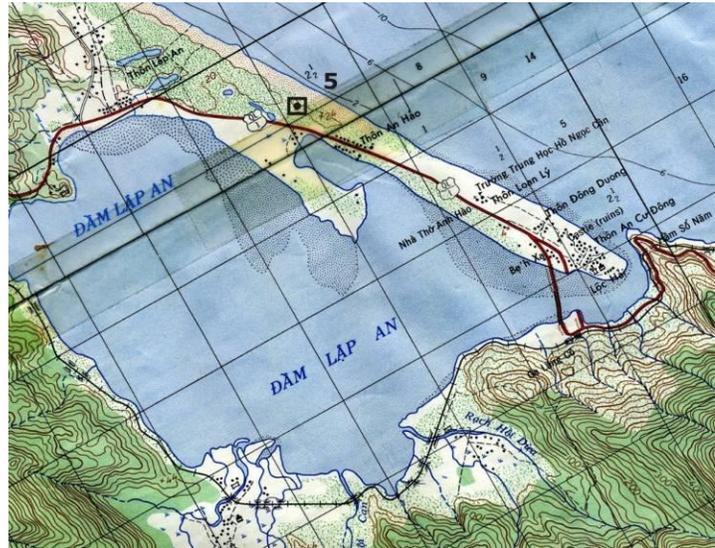


5. Fire Support Base (FSB) Beach

(AT 871996: Reference, map sheet 6641 IV, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps.

C Battery.

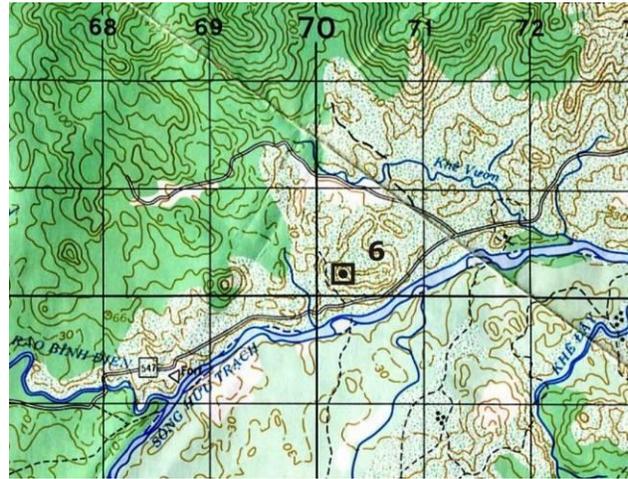
Although listed as having been assigned to FSB Beach, C Battery only sent an advanced party; the battery never occupied the location. The area was considered secure. From time to time members of C Battery spent a little R & R time at the “Beach.”¹⁰



¹⁰ Per email correspondence of BG (Ret) Thomas R. Ice, dated 15 Aug 2010.

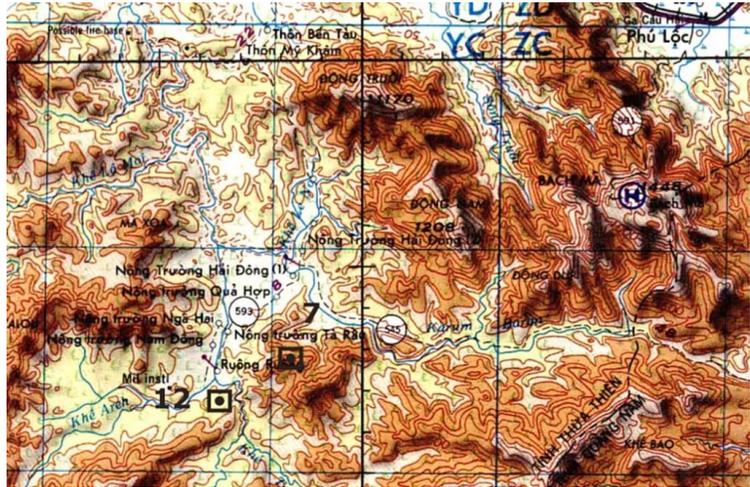
6. Fire Support Base (FSB) Birmingham

(YD 703102: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps. A.k.a. Hill 90. Located approximately 12 km SSW of Hue along Highway 547, just north of Song Huu Trach. Named in honor of Platoon Sergeant Edward A. Birmingham, killed in action 02 October 1967.



7. Fire Support Base (FSB) Hank

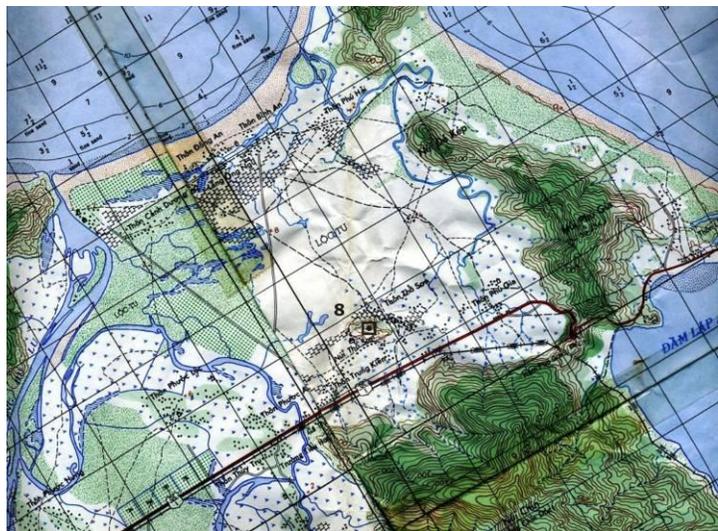
(YC 910880: Reference, map sheet 6541 III, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps. Located in the Ruong Ruong Valley, approximately 54 km WNW of Da Nang Air Base and 22 km SW of Phu Loc.



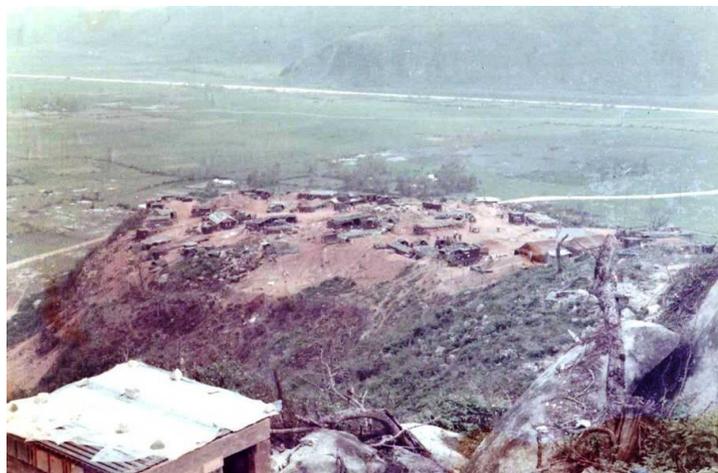
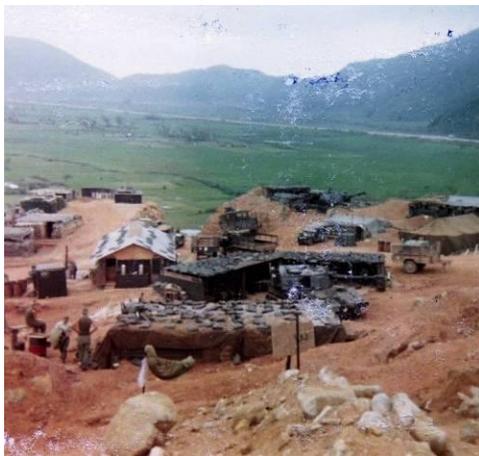
C Battery.

8. Fire Support Base (FSB) Hill 88/Denise

(AU 808018: Reference, map sheet 6441 IV, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps. A.k.a. Nui Trun. Located on the coast at the base of Mui Chou May Dong. 36 km ESE of Phu Bai.



C Battery.



9. Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick/Quick I (9 & 10)

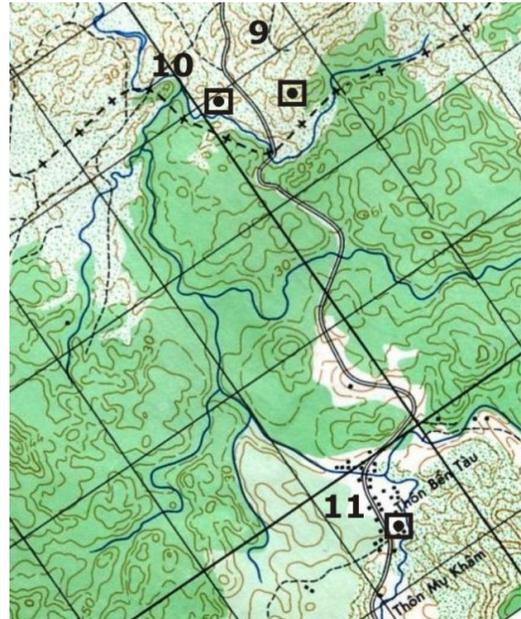
(YD 906028: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps. Located along road that ran south from QL-1 to Ruong Ruong Valley, approximately 13 km due south of Phu Bai.

B Battery.

10. Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick II (11)

(YC 894994: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000). Thua Thien Province, I Corps. Located near Thon Ben Tau, approximately 20 km due west of Q Phu Loc and 16 km S of Phu Bai.

B Battery and C Battery.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery: Louisville (Jefferson County), Kentucky.

Location(s): Gia Le Combat Base (YD 827152: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).

During their tour of duty in Vietnam the battalion fired approximately 150,000 rounds.

UNIT ROSTER

CUNDIFF, Robert W.	LTC	REDDEN, Donald L.	SGT
BUSH, Charles H.	MAJ	SHARP, Roscoe C., Jr.	SGT
JAMES, Robert D.	MAJ	GARDNER, Charles A., III	SP5
BOATMAN, Howard	CPT	GREULICH, Joseph L.	SP5
HENDERSON, Garland L.	CPT	JOHNSON, William S.	SP5
LOY, Harold O.	CPT	McCOY, Finley T.	SP5
MAYS, Terrel D.	CPT	MORRIS, James H., Jr.	SP5
TILLEY, John P.	CPT	RICHARDSON, Robert K.	SP5
WILLSON, Bingham H.	CPT	ROBINSON, John A.	SP5
WILSON, Roye S.	CPT	TAYLOR, Robert S.	SP5
RICHIE, Charles W.	1LT	TOMLINSON, Larry W.	SP5
ALBERS, Robert E., Jr.	2LT	VAUGHN, Elvis L.	SP5
CLARK, David L.	2LT	BARRINGER, Roberts A.	SP4
DOYLE, Charles D.	2LT	BEAM, Robert J.	SP4
DOYLE, Earl L., Jr.	2LT	BEAUCHAMP, William F., Jr.	SP4
PETERS, Henry D., II	2LT	BISCAN, John J., Jr.	SP4
KIRK, J. D.	SGM	BRADEN, Ronnie D.	SP4
BROWN, John M., Jr.	MSG	BURTON, Eugene E., Jr.	SP4
GOODMAN, Dewey J.	MSG	CLEMENTS, Marion K.	SP4
BAILEY, Robert L.	SFC	COFFEY, Charles R.	SP4
HASSELWANDER, Philip H., Jr.	SFC	CRAVENS, Leon J.	SP4
LANKSWERT, Patrick E.	SFC	DAWSON, Bruce L.	SP4
BALLARD, Lawrence A.	SSG	DURHAM, Robert P.	SP4
BEKIS, Anatolis	SSG	GROSS, John B., Jr.	SP4
BORNTRAEGER, Louis J.	SSG	HAWTHORNE, Charles R.	SP4
JACOBS, Jerry R.	SSG	JOHNSTON, Ronald K.	SP4
OAKES, Raymond C.	SSG	KITTERMAN, Charles P.	SP4
RABISHAW, Oliver R.	SSG	KRUPP, Ronald L.	SP4
ROTH, James T.	SSG	LARUE, Ottis E.	SP4
RUCKREIGEL, Charles H.	SSG	MAGGARD, Paschal D.	SP4
HUDSON, Charles C.	SGT	MARSHALL, James C., III	SP4
LINK, Urban J., Jr.	SGT	MITCHELL, Robert L.	SP4
MULLINS, Roger A.	SGT	MONTGOMERY, Ronald B.	SP4
O'CONNOR, David F.	SGT	OTT, Walter R.	SP4
OWENS, Michael E.	SGT	REESE, Houston G., Jr.	SP4

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

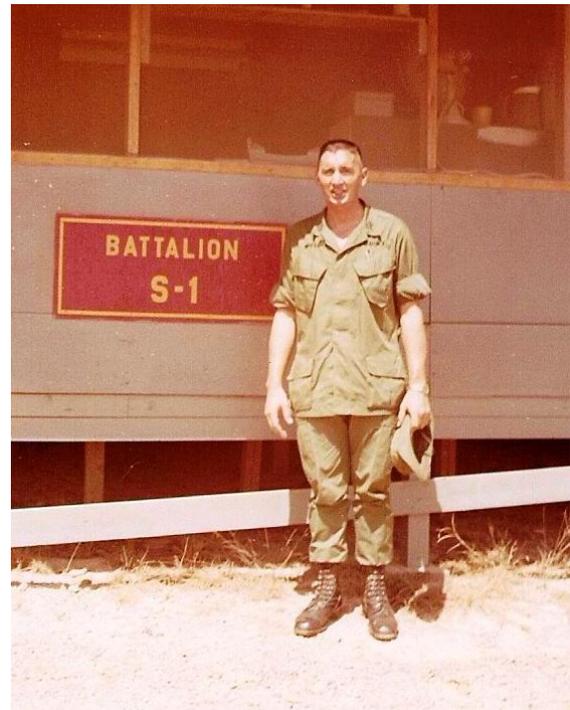
RITCHIE, Gordon M.	SP4	PETERWORTH, Donald L.	PFC
RYAN, Martin C., Jr.	SP4	ROUNDTREE, Elmer R.	PFC
SNEED, Daniel R.	SP4	SCHOTT, James W., Jr.	PFC
THOMPSON, Charles D.	SP4	SMITH, James J.	PFC
VAN ZEE, David J.	SP4	SPROWLS, William T.	PFC
WHITWORTH, David A.	SP4	STEWART, Robert L.	PFC
BALDWIN, Alfred T., Jr.	PFC	STILES, Clinton C.	PFC
BARNETT, Timothy W.	PFC	TAYLOR, Anthony E.	PFC
CAZEL, Gary R.	PFC	THOMAS, Michael A.	PFC
COFFEY, Rodger D.	PFC	TRACY, Don W.	PFC
DUDLEY, Bradley B.	PFC	VAIRIN, Michael B.	PFC
FIELDS, Glen B.	PFC	VAN METER, Larry W.	PFC
GABHART, Gary S.	PFC	VAUGHN, James R., Jr.	PFC
HAMILTON, Gerald T.	PFC	WALLACE, Donald L.	PFC
HARDISON, William T.	PFC	WEBB, Robert	PFC
HATFIELD, Dennis L.	PFC	WILLIFORD, Robert E.	PFC
JORGENSEN, James F.	PFC	YARBERRY, Danny W.	PFC
KAMBER, Michael S.	PFC	AYRE, James W.	PV2
LEHR, Carl W., Jr.	PFC	CLARK, Ronald L.	PV2
LOTZE, Charles W.	PFC	JONES, Rufus, Jr.	PV2
MASSEY, James E.	PFC	McAFEE, Gerald C.	PV2
McCUTCHEN, Phillip H.	PFC	MEUTER, Craig F.	PV2
McINTIRE, Joseph D.	PFC	STEWART, John W., Jr.	PV2
MERCER, James A.	PFC	TINSLEY, Marion F.	PV2
NEAL, Herbert A.	PFC		



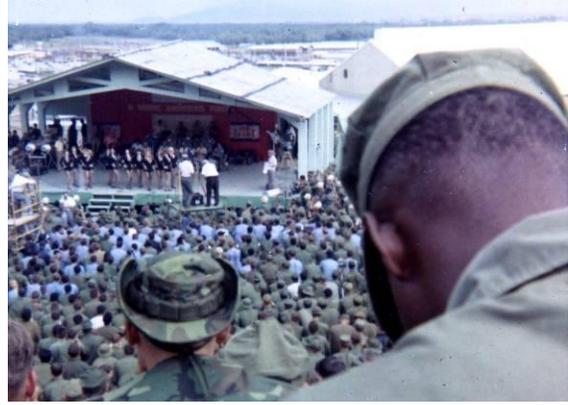
KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



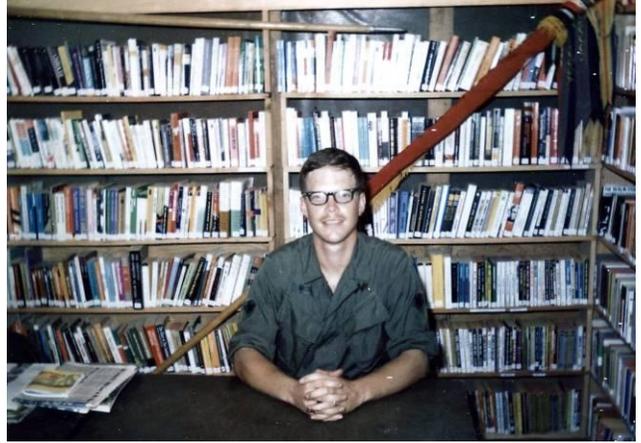
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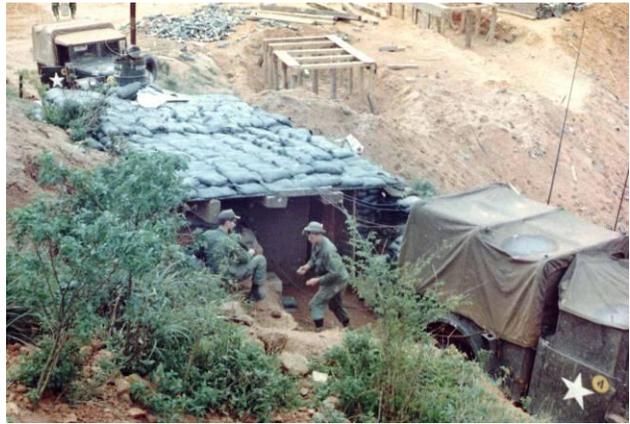
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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Service Battery: Louisville (Jefferson County), Kentucky.

Location(s): Gia Le Combat Base (YD 827152: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).

UNIT ROSTER

BERTHOLD, Julius L.	CPT	GOEING, Nelson D.	SP4
HARBIN, Charles H.	2LT	HARDIN, David W.	SP4
PFEIFFER, Richard N.	2LT	HARDY, Ronald E.	SP4
BUTLER, Charles K.	CW3	HENDERSON, Ronald J.	SP4
SHANKS, Cecil C.	CW3	HUGHES, Roy W.	SP4
HANNA, Richard L.	CW2	HUTCHERSON, James L.	SP4
ELKINS, Hubert W.	1SG	JOHNSON, James F.	SP4
ELMEN, Frank J.	SFC	JOHNSON, Ronald A.	SP4
SHANKS, Albert A.	SFC	KAELIN, Milton L., Jr.	SP4
WADLEY, Larry P.	SFC	LEICHHARDT, Alan L.	SP4
CHEATHAM, Harold D.	SSG	McELWAIN, John R.	SP4
KEENEY, Presley R.	SSG	MOORE, Roderick W.	SP4
KERSEY, James A.	SSG	MORTON, James L. III	SP4
LAMKIN, Joseph T.	SSG	OLINGER, Anthony E.	SP4
WIEST, James E.	SSG	PRATHER, Gary W.	SP4
CARR, Bertram A.	SGT	RICHARDSON, Gary W.	SP4
CROWE, Donald L.	SGT	ROBINSON, Bobby D.	SP4
HALL, Elmer R.	SGT	SCHMIDT, John M.	SP4
RAUSCH, Vincent E., Jr.	SGT	SCHMITT, John M.	SP4
SCHMITT, John W., Jr.	SGT	SEIDT, Michael F.	SP4
TAYLOR, Daniel B., Jr.	SGT	SHELTON, Jimmie D.	SP4
BOWMAN, Freddie T.	SP5	SMITH, Myron E.	SP4
DELPH, Donald L.	SP5	WILKERSON, James R.	SP4
ESTES, Earl R.	SP5	ATCHER, Larry P.	PFC
GODBRY, James M.	SP5	BRADLEY, Tanney M.	PFC
MARTIN, Larry G.	SP5	CARPENTER, Donald L.	PFC
STEWART, Robert D.	SP5	CLARK, Garnett S.	PFC
TAYLOR, Paul D.	SP5	CONNOLLY, Edward M., Jr.	PFC
BAUMGARDNER, Donald B.	SP4	CRUME, John T.	PFC
BUMBA, Ronald H.	SP4	FRANKLIN, Donald L.	PFC
CHUMLEY, Robert L.	SP4	GARRETT, David W.	PFC
CLARK, Norman V.	SP4	GOODMAN, Thomas H.	PFC
COMPTON, Ronald G.	SP4	HEAD, Charles R.	PFC
CROWE, James E.	SP4	HESTER, James R.	PFC
EPPERSON, George W.	SP4	HICKS, Rudy E.	PFC
GAGEL, Delbert L.	SP4	LAMPTON, Robert J.	PFC

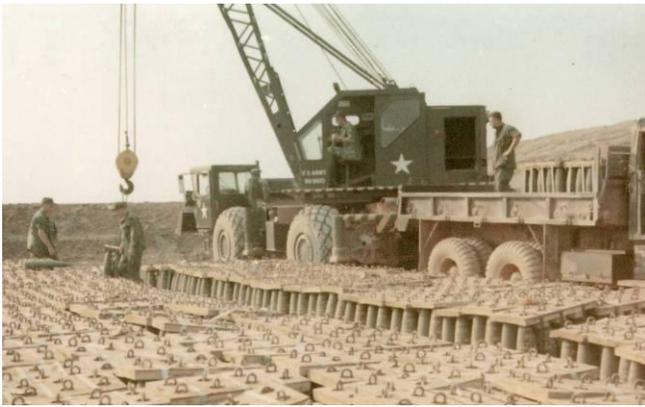
KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

LEESE, Jimmie L. PFC
MUDD, Joseph K. PFC
MUNCY, Larry L. PFC
PHILLIPS, Harold J. PFC
SMITH, Richard E. PFC
VANMETER, Warren K. PFC
WALLACE, Ronald L. PFC

WIKOFF, Charles C., Jr. PFC
LEACHMAN, Charles C. PV2
PAGELSEN, Max E. PV2
BOYD, Ernest D. PV1
CALVIN, Davis L., Jr. PV1



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



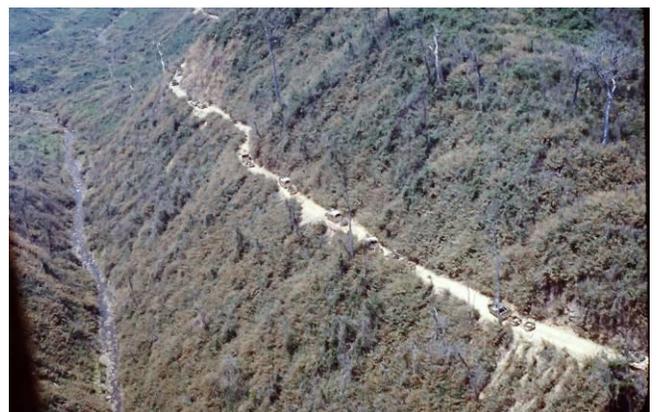
KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Alpha Battery (Alpha Animals): Carrollton (Carroll County), Kentucky.

Location(s): Camp Hochmuth (YD 885127: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).

07 March 1969 – 11 March 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Birmingham (YD 703102: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).

11 March 1969 – 14 May 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Bastogne (YD 622096: Reference, map sheet 6441 I, 1:50,000).

14 May 1969 – 23 June 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Birmingham (YD 703102: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).

23 June 1969 – 02 July 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Bastogne (YD 622096: Reference, map sheet 6441 I, 1:50,000).

02 July 1969 - : Fire Support Base (FSB) Birmingham (YD 703102: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).

During their tour of duty in Vietnam Alpha Battery fired a total of 31,561 rounds.

A Battery Gun Nicknames

Gun 1 – Ambushers	(A – 11)
Gun 2 – Anna Boom	(A – 12)
Gun 3 – Avengers	(A – 13)
Gun 4 – Atom Ant	(A – 14)
Gun 5 – Angel of Hell	(A – 15)
Gun 6 – Assassin	(A – 16)

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

UNIT ROSTER:

WILHOITE, Gerald J.	CPT	HULEFELD, James A.	SP4
KINDOLL, Charles S.	2LT	JOHNSON, John A.	SP4
WOOD, Walter R.	2LT	LOWE, Joseph W.	SP4
MILLER, Coy G.	1SG	MAIDEN, Wavie L., Jr.	SP4
BAILEY, Robert	SFC	MARSH, George C.	SP4
CHAPPEL, Luther M.	SFC	NEW, Thomas R.	SP4
PRICE, Garroll	SFC	OAK, Dalton L.	SP4
CALDWELL, Robert J.	SSG	PENNINGTON, Forrest E.	SP4
CALVERT, Roy W.	SSG	PYLES, Carroll E.	SP4
DOWNEY, William E.	SSG	RILEY, Ronald D.	SP4
KROHN, Raymond L.	SSG	SATCHWELL, Edgar L.	SP4
SPENNEBERG, Ray T.	SSG	STEVENS, James F.	SP4
STOUT, Michael	SSG	SUPPLEE, James L.	SP4
PERRY, Orve S.	SP6	TILLEY, Terry L.	SP4
BROWN, Robert C.	SGT	TINGLE, Donald W.	SP4
CLARK, David L.	SGT	ALSUP, Rodney	PFC
DUNN, William B.	SGT	ANDREW, James E.	PFC
EAVES, William G.	SGT	BALL, James E.	PFC
HAWKINS, Dwight L.	SGT	BERLING, Robert A.	PFC
MARKSBERRY, James H.	SGT	BISHOP, William R.	PFC
MARTIN, Joseph W.	SGT	BLACKBURN, Danny L.	PFC
NEWBY, Wilford B.	SGT	BRENT, Jerry L.	PFC
ROBERTS, Jimmy W.	SGT	BRIERLY, Donald W.	PFC
SPENCER, Louis A.	SGT	BROWN, Chester R.	PFC
WILLIAMS, Michael R.	SGT	BROWN, David K.	PFC
MATTINGLY, Larry E.	SP5	BROWN, William D.	PFC
ALDRIDGE, David C.	CPL	CAMPBELL, Gerald R.	PFC
DERMON, Robert E.	CPL	CLARK, Donald C.	PFC
HATTER, Charles W.	CPL	COLLIER, Larry	PFC
LEACH, Jerry W.	CPL	CULVER, Ronnie L.	PFC
OGBURN, Donald R.	CPL	DOLL, Charles M.	PFC
PYLES, Terry L.	CPL	DUNN, Danny S.	PFC
STETHEN, David A.	CPL	EVANS, Larry H.	PFC
WILSON, Earl W.	CPL	GINN, David A.	PFC
BARNETT, William D.	SP4	GINN, Jerry W.	PFC
BUCKLER, Gentry W.	SP4	GINN, Larry B.	PFC
BUTCHER, James C.	SP4	GOEBEL, Lawrence V.	PFC
COLLIER, Ray	SP4	GRAHAM, Gary W.	PFC
HOLLOWAY, Walter C.	SP4	HUGHES, Garry L.	PFC

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

KISSNER, Howard W.	PFC	SHAFER, Paul D.	PFC
LATHREM, Billy C.	PFC	SMITH, James W.	PFC
LAYTON, Larry W.	PFC	SMITH, Orville W.	PFC
LEE, David B.	PFC	SMITH, William T.	PFC
MARSH, Lynn D.	PFC	STEVENS, David F.	PFC
McDOWELL, Michael E.	PFC	STOCKDALE, Charles B.	PFC
McMANNIS, Dennis C.	PFC	STOCKDALE, Graham D.	PFC
MEFFORD, George W.	PFC	WARREN, Gary M.	PFC
MILLER, Henry L.	PFC	WENTWORTH, Gary L.	PFC
NELSON, William R.	PFC	WESTOVER, Keith A.	PFC
OAK, Jerry M.	PFC	WESTRICK, William M.	PFC
ONEY, Fred B., Jr.	PFC	WHITAKER, William D.	PFC
PAYTON, Glenn T.	PFC	WINGHAM, Henry F.	PFC
POWELL, Jerry L.	PFC	WRIGHT, Gayle L.	PFC
POWELL, William J.	PFC	ELDRIDGE, Michael L.	PV2
PYLES, Douglas L.	PFC	MACON, Donald G.	PV2
RECTOR, Thomas C.	PFC	PERRY, Morgan B. Jr.	PV2
ROBERTS, Melvin D.	PFC	WESTRICK, Dennis W.	PV2



"Tuffy"



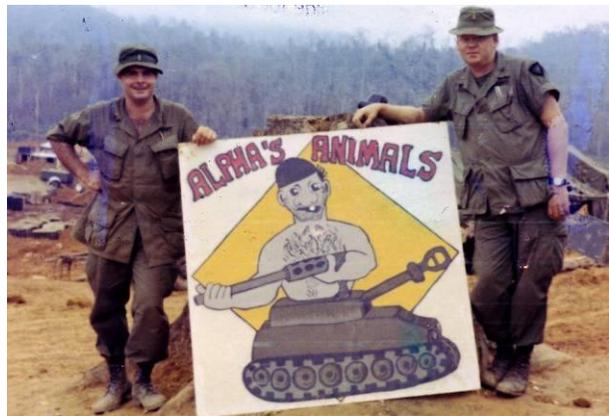
KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

On 13 November 1968, at 1400 hours, Brigadier General Allan G. Pixton, XXIV Corps Artillery Commander, pulled the lanyard on Number 3 piece, Battery A, and fired the first 2/138th Field Artillery round into the mountain range south of Phu Bai, Vietnam.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

SP4 David (left) and SP5 Jim Stevens chose to stay together with Battery A, though policy would have let either stay home. U.S. Army photograph.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



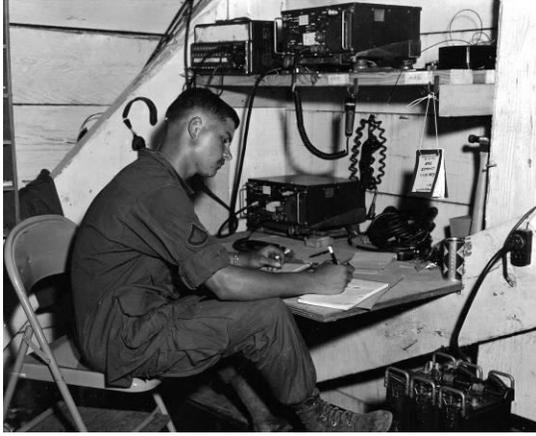
KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Attack on Fire Support Base Bastogne – 15 May 1969

The following is taken from the *Operational Report Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery for the Period Ending 31 July 1969, Section I, Operations: Significant Activities:*

At approximately 120215H May, Fire Support Base (FSB) Bastogne (YD622096) was attacked with mortars, RPG's (Rocket Propelled Grenade) and small arms fire. An RPG round hit the powder pit of gun 4 of Battery C, 1st Battalion, 83rd Artillery which was collocated on the fire base with Battery A of this battalion. A fire was started which resulted in the detonation of 80 rounds of 175mm projectiles. Final protective fires were fired. A first light sweep of the area produced 30 RPG rounds. During the attack, three men from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery were wounded, SSG Raymond L. Krohn, SP4 Carroll E. Pyles and

Kentucky National Guardsmen Wounded in Action (WIA) at FSB Bastogne,
15 May 1969.

Wounded in Action (WIA)

SSG Raymond L. Krohn

SP4 Carroll E. Pyles

LAST NAME



Bravo Battery: Elizabethtown (Hardin County), Kentucky.

Location(s): Camp Hochmuth (YD 885127: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
11 November 1968 – 18 November 1968: Fire Support Base (FSB) Anzio (YD 929072: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
18 November 1968 – 20 November 1968: Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick (YD 904029: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
20 November 1968 – 21 November 1968: Fire Support Base (FSB) Anzio (YD 929072: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
21 November 1968 – 28 November 1968: Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick (YD 904029: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
28 November 1968 – 05 January 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Anzio (YD 929072: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
05 January 1969 – 31 January 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick (YD 904029: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
31 January 1969 – 04 February 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick II (YC 894996: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
04 February 1969 – 29 March 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Anzio (YD 929072: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
29 March 1969 – 12 April 1969: Camp Hochmuth (YD 885127: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
12 April 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick II (YC 894996: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
12 April 1969 – 30 April 1969: Camp Hochmuth (YD 885127: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
01 May 1969 – 27 June 1969: Phu Bai (YD 885127: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).
27 June 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Tomahawk (ZD 116011: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).

During their tour of duty in Vietnam Bravo Battery fired a total of 45,784 rounds.

B Battery Gun Nicknames

Gun 1 – Bushwhacker	(B – 11)
Gun 2 – Bad News ¹¹	(B – 12)
Gun 3 – Bluegrass Stud	(B – 13)
Gun 4 – Boom Boom	(B – 14)
Gun 5 – Birth Control	(B – 15)
Gun 6 – Bullwinkle	(B – 16)

¹¹ Originally nicked named Baby Huey at Fort Hood, re-named prior to shipping to Vietnam.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

UNIT ROSTER

O'KEEFE, James W.	CPT	DAUGHERTY, Norman W.	SP4
EATMON, Arthur T.	2LT	DITTO, William A.	SP4
LEE, James W.	2LT	GOODMAN, Rual W.	SP4
HIBBS, Elmer L.	1SG	JOHNSON, Harold E.	SP4
COTTON, Ross T.	SFC	KEPLINGER, Curtis R.	SP4
CECIL, Wilford O.	SSG	LANCASTER, Joseph R.	SP4
LAWSON, James C.	SSG	MASTERS, Harold E.	SP4
McAFEE, Lisle C.	SSG	MATTINGLY, Charles M.	SP4
PFEIFFER, Joe E.	SSG	MILLER, William L.	SP4
PRICE, Earl J.	SSG	MORRIS, Glen E.	SP4
SHELLNER, Earl S.	SSG	PECKINPAUGH, Maro D.	SP4
SIMPSON, Francis L.	SSG	PIKE, James A.	SP4
SIPES, Eddie M.	SSG	SIPES, Bernie L.	SP4
YATES, Horard K.	SSG	SIPES, Hal R.	SP4
BLAKEY, Marvin L.	SGT	SIPES, Robert E.	SP4
CARR, Marion A.	SGT	TRENT, Roy L.	SP4
MARTIN, Larry W.	SGT	WEBB, Zack K.	SP4
MEADOR, Donald J.	SGT	WILLIAMS, David A.	SP4
SHELTON, Donald E.	SGT	WITHERS, Claude L.	SP4
SIMMONS, Jackie W.	SGT	BASHAM, Ervin T.	PFC
WHELAN, Samuel C.	SGT	BASHAM, Wayne R.	PFC
WORNER, Cirtis S., Jr.	SGT	BLACK, Stephen D.	PFC
WRIGHT, Roy E.	SGT	BLAYDES, James R.	PFC
BASHAM, Gordon W.	SP5	BOWMAN, Hughie S.	PFC
HAWKINS, Kenneth L.	SP5	BOWMAN, Stanley L.	PFC
LOGSDON, Larry W.	SP5	BROWN, Robert C.	PFC
ALVEY, Leon F.	CPL	BUSSELL, Thomas R.	PFC
BASHAM, Robert F.	CPL	CARMAN, Donald E.	PFC
BENNETT, James E.	CPL	CARMAN, Gary F.	PFC
CLARK, James I.	CPL	CECIL, Willis R.	PFC
SCOTT, Joel D.	CPL	CLAYCOMB, Edward H.	PFC
THOMAS, Charles L.	CPL	CONNOR, Stewart E.	PFC
WARREN, James A.	CPL	COOGLE, Ervin L.	PFC
ALVEY, Lawrence W.	SP4	DENNIS, John	PFC
ATCHER, Robert C.	SP4	DOOLEY, Charles F.	PFC
BARNES, Calvin O.	SP4	DOWELL, Dennis L.	PFC
CLARK, Douglas M.	SP4	DOWELL, Ernie R.	PFC
CRANE, Randell	SP4	DYE, Michael G.	PFC
CRAVENS, Carl L.	SP4	FLORENCE, Ronald E.	PFC

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

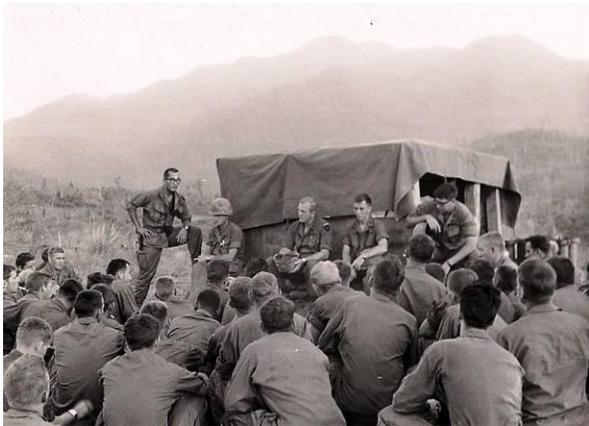
FORD, Gary D.	PFC	PATTERSON, Gerald R.	PFC
GAMES, William F.	PFC	PHILLIPS, Bobby J.	PFC
GILKEY, Bennie D.	PFC	POPPELWELL, Robbie A.	PFC
GLENN, Gary H.	PFC	RAGLAND, William M.	PFC
GRAY, James V., Jr.	PFC	RAY, Bernard H.	PFC
HALL, Sidney C.	PFC	RAY, William L.	PFC
HEDMAN, William F.	PFC	RENFROW, James R.	PFC
HELM, James D.	PFC	RITCHIE, Martin L.	PFC
HENRY, Ronald W.	PFC	SHACKLETTE, Charles E.	PFC
JAGGERS, Jan R.	PFC	SHOFFNER, Everett C.	PFC
JENKINS, James R.	PFC	SIMON, Gary L.	PFC
KELLEMS, William C.	PFC	SKAGGS, Johnnie R.	PFC
LAY, John R.	PFC	SKEES, Joseph R.	PFC
LOGSDON, Horace K.	PFC	STANTON, Freelyn D.	PFC
LOGSDON, James E.	PFC	WHITE, Samuel J.	PFC
MABE, Royce D.	PFC	WILKERSON, Michael R.	PFC
McDOWELL, James M.	PFC	WILLIS, Edgar D.	PFC
NALL, Roy E.	PFC	WOOD, James B.	PFC
PACK, Curtis A.	PFC	HENDERSON, William T.	PV2



"Chop Chop"



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Charlie Battery: Bardstown (Nelson County), Kentucky.

Location(s): Gia Le Combat Base: (YD 830150: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
27 November 1968 – 06 March 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Hill 88/Denise: (AU 807015: Reference, map sheet 6441 IV, 1:50,000).
06 March 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Tomahawk: (ZD 116011: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).
06 March 1969 – 16 March 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Hill 88/Denise: (AU 807015: Reference, map sheet 6441 IV, 1:50,000).
16 March 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Tomahawk: (ZD 116011: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).
16 March 1969 – 10 April 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Hill 88/Denise: (AU 807015: Reference, map sheet 6441 IV, 1:50,000).
10 April 1969 – 15 April 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Tomahawk: (ZD 116011: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).
15 April 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Beach: (AT 871996: Reference, map sheet 6641 IV, 1:50,000).
15 April 1969 – 25 April 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Tomahawk: (ZD 116011: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).
25 April 1969 – 27 April 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick II (YC 894996: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
27 April 1969 – 29 April 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Hank (YD 912887: Reference, map sheet 6541 III, 1:50,000).
30 April 1969 – 13 May 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Sam (YC 869841: Reference, map sheet 6541 III, 1:50,000).
13 May 1969 – 27 June 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Tomahawk: (ZD 116011: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).
27 June 1969 – 18 July 1969: Phu Bai (YD 885127: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).
18 July 1969: Fire Support Base (FSB) Quick I (YC 903029: Reference, map sheet 6541 IV, 1:50,000).
18 July 1969 - : Phu Bai (YD 885127: Reference, map sheet 6541 I, 1:50,000).

During their tour of duty in Vietnam Charlie Battery fired a total of 45,453 rounds.

C Battery Gun Nicknames

Gun 1 – Crusifier	(C – 11)
Gun 2 – Cong Coffin	(C – 12)
Gun 3 – Comanchero	(C – 13)
Gun 4 – Conqueror	(C – 14)
Gun 5 – Cuntukian	(C – 15)
Gun 6 – Clutch Cargo	(C – 16)

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

UNIT ROSTER

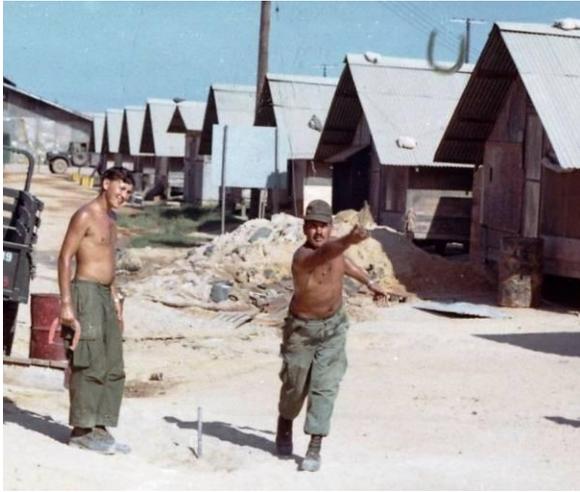
McCLURE, Samuel T.	1LT	JOHNSON, Francis L.	SP4
HARMON, James T., Jr.	2LT	KEELING, Joseph E., Jr.	SP4
ICE, Thomas R.	2LT	LEWIS, Julian W.	SP4
SIMPSON, Joseph P.	1SG	McGEE, James D.	SP4
HARNED, William K.	SFC	OSBORNE, William F.	SP4
BISCHOFF, Walter K.	SSG	RAISOR, Charles T.	SP4
BROWN, Glen A.	SSG	WRAY, Jim A.	SP4
BROWN, Harold M.	SSG	ALLENDER, Donald R.	PFC
BUNCH, Freddie A.	SSG	ATWOOD, Robert W.	PFC
ICE, Joseph K.	SSG	BARTLEY, Joseph H., Jr.	PFC
MOORE, James T.	SSG	BICKETT, Gary W.	PFC
STONE, David G.	SSG	BISHOP, David R.	PFC
TAYLOR, Charles G.	SSG	BLANDFORD, Louis T., Jr.	PFC
CROWE, Even L., Jr.	SGT	BOONE, Samuel R.	PFC
FILIATREAU, Robert S.	SGT	BRADBURY, James G.	PFC
HAMILTON, William G.	SGT	BROWN, Joseph W.	PFC
RIZER, John W.	SGT	CHEATHAM, Danny B.	PFC
SNELLEN, Billy R.	SGT	CLAN, George W.	PFC
STONE, Charles M.	SGT	COOMES, Donald R.	PFC
STUMPH, Bobby E.	SGT	CORNISH, Larry B.	PFC
THOMAS, Wendell C.	SGT	COULTER, Charles E.	PFC
THOMPSON, Louis B.	SGT	COULTER, Roger A.	PFC
TROUTWINE, William A.	SGT	COY, Donald R.	PFC
CECIL, Robert L.	SP5	DICKERSON, James C.	PFC
PARRISH, Donald J.	SP5	DUFFY, Martin P.	PFC
COLLINS, Wayne, C.	CPL	DURR, Robert H.	PFC
MOORE, Joseph C.	CPL	HALL, John D.	PFC
RIGGS, Charles T.	CPL	HAYDON, Joseph A., Jr.	PFC
SIMPSON, Michael H.	CPL	HURST, William B.	PFC
STANSBURY, Charles F.	CPL	HUTCHINS, James N.	PFC
THOMAS, Jerry L.	CPL	ICE, James L.	PFC
THOMPSON, Jerry L.	CPL	JANES, Jerry T.	PFC
BALLARD, Thomas D.	SP4	KEELING, Larry C.	PFC
BARNES, James F.	SP4	KING, Bruce L.	PFC
BREWER, Allen T.	SP4	LINTON, Charles R.	PFC
COLLINS, David B.	SP4	LYVERS, James W.	PFC
COLLINS, Theodore H., Jr.	SP4	LYVERS, Robert F.	PFC
DOWNS, Harry T.	SP4	MARSHALL, Joseph T.	PFC
DOWNS, Thomas R.	SP4	MASTERSON, George, Jr.	PFC
DRURY, Joseph T.	SP4	McCLASKEY, Booker S.	PFC
GREENWELL, William R.	SP4	McILVOY, Joseph R.	PFC
HALL, Bernard L.	SP4	NALLY, Joseph D.	PFC
HARDIN, Kenneth E.	SP4	NATION, Owen	PFC
HIBBS, Ronald E.	SP4	NEEL, Joseph E.	PFC
HILL, Donald F.	SP4	NEWTON, James F.	PFC

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

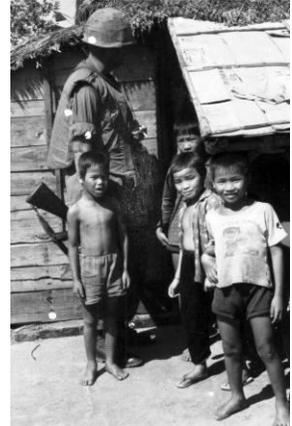
NEWTON, Joseph R.	PFC	SIMPSON, Ronald E.	PFC
NEWTON, Joseph R.	PFC	STONE, Stanley G.	PFC
PARRISH, Hark W., Jr.	PFC	STONE, William D.	PFC
PEAKE, William L.	PFC	STURGILL, Thomas J.	PFC
PUCKETT, William D.	PFC	UNSELD, David A.	PFC
REXROAT, Ronald G.	PFC	WELCH, William E., Jr.	PFC
ROBERTS, William K.	PFC	YATES, William L.	PFC
ROBINSON, Steve	PFC	HIBBS, George B.	PV2
ROBY, John W.	PFC	LEWIS, William G.	PV2
SHELBURNE, Joseph L.	PFC	McCLINTOCK, Paul L., Jr.	PV2
SHELBURNE, Kenneth A.	PFC	REXROAT, Gary W.	PV2
SIMPSON, James D.	PFC		
SIMPSON, John R.	PFC		



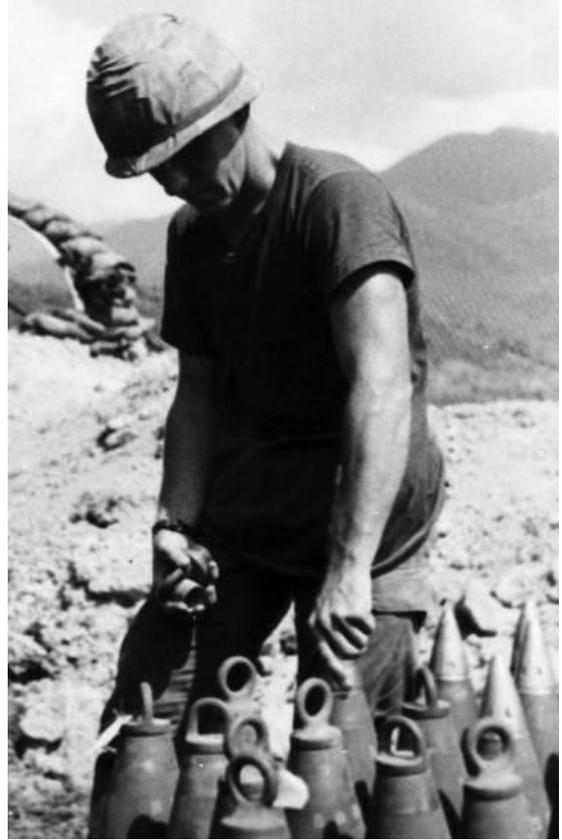
KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



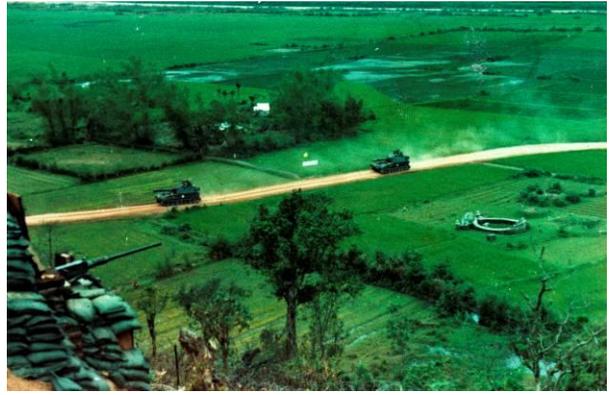
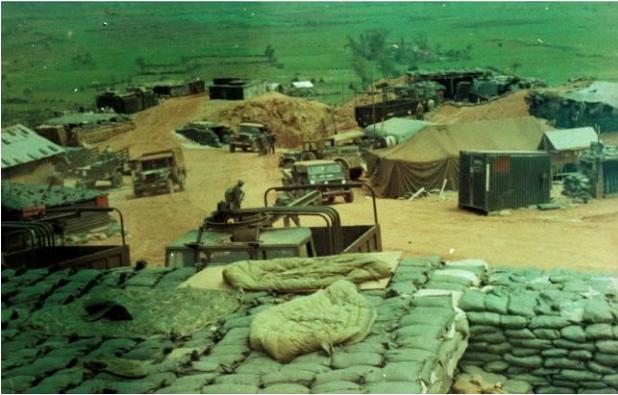
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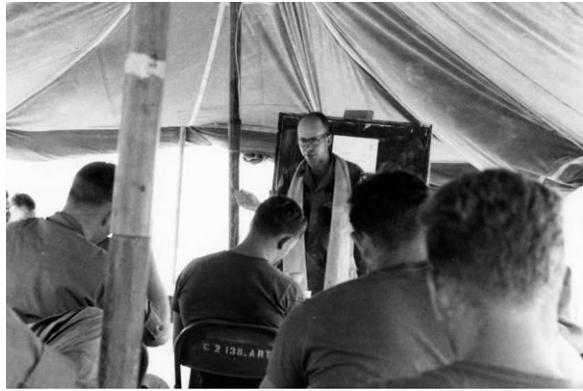
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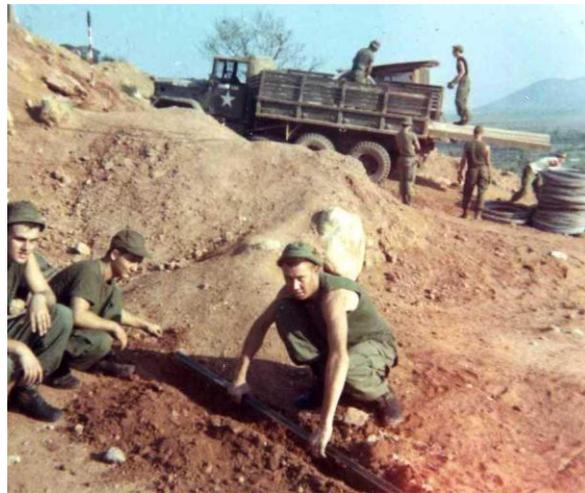
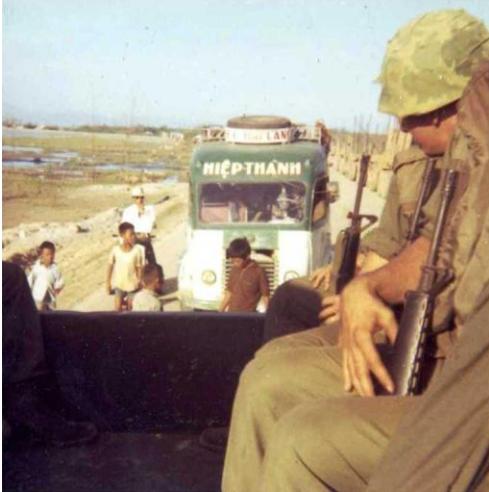
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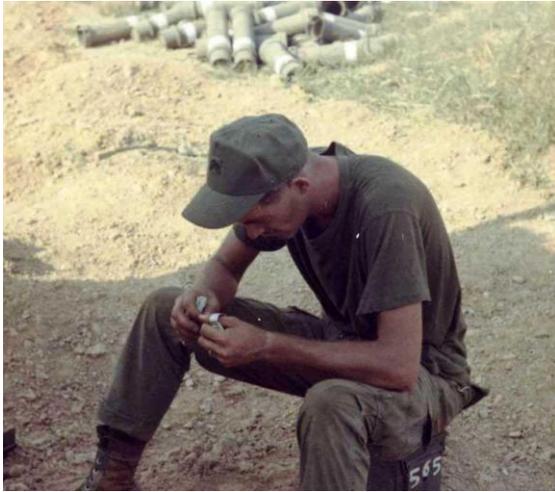
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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



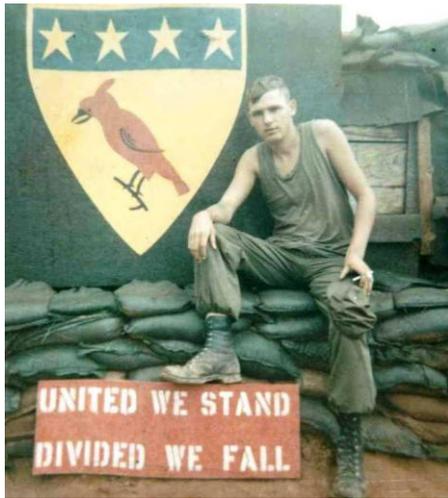
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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



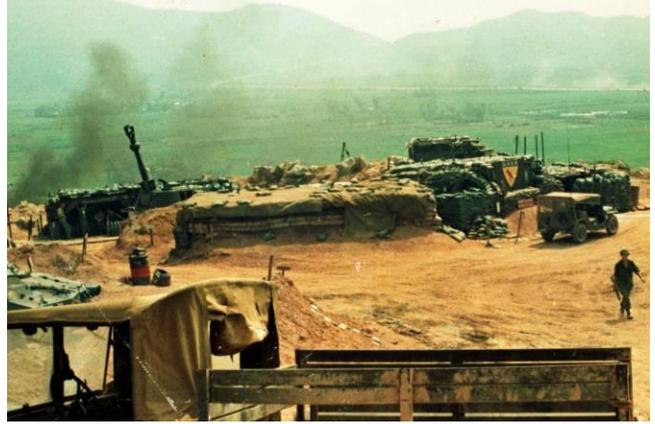
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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Attack on Fire Support Base Tomahawk – 19 June 1969

The following is taken from the *Operational Report – Lessons Learned, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) for the Period Ending 31 July 1969*:

On the night of 19 June elements of the 72nd Sapper Company, 4th North Vietnamese Army Regiment attacked Fire Base Tomahawk (ZD 113009)—located on QL-1 in Phu Loc District—occupied by 1st Platoon, C Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry and C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery (155). Enemy elements—as was indicated in later prisoner of war interrogation and captured documents—had made a thorough reconnaissance of the fire base for several days to detect weak spots in the perimeter's defenses.

At approximately 0130 hours the Infantry command post located in the southern most portion of the fire base received the primary thrust of the sapper attack. Mortar and RPG rounds poured in from the eastern and southern portions of the perimeter and onto the infantry and artillery command posts as the enemy breached the wire in these areas. Once inside the wire, the sappers moved to key locations destroying bunkers, exposed equipment and artillery positions.

At 0230 hours the platoon leader of 1/C/2-501 organized a small force to regain control of the command post. ARA and med-evacs were on call throughout the night as was a reaction force organized by the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry. At 0330 hours the main attack on FB Tomahawk ceased while harassing fire continued until 0530 hours. At 0430 two platoons from B Company, 1-327th were moved from FB Roy to blocking positions to the south of FB Tomahawk. At 0550 hours the Reconnaissance Platoon, 1-327th was lifted onto FB Tomahawk and swept across the overrun command post to the southwest, but failed to find signs of enemy activity. At first light elements of C/1-327th were airlifted into the fire base and also swept to the south and southeast where they found staging positions for the attack as well as cached rucksacks. The losses suffered by the enemy were seventeen killed and one prisoner of war; casualties suffered by friendly forces were thirteen killed and fifty wounded. In addition, three 155mm howitzers were destroyed and one rendered inoperative.¹²



A 1 1/4 ton truck of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery (KY) destroyed by the North Vietnamese attack on Fire Base Tomahawk.
Photo courtesy of Donald Parrish.

¹² *Operational Report – Lessons Learned, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) for the Period Ending 31 July 1969*, pp. 10-11.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Kentucky National Guardsmen Killed in Action (KIA) / Wounded in Action (WIA) at
FSB Tomahawk, 19 June 1969.

Killed in Action (KIA)

Luther M. Chappel
David B. Collins
Joseph R. McIlvoy
James T. Moore
Ronald E. Simpson

Wounded in Action (WIA)

Louis T. Blandford
Roger D. Coffey
Wayne C. Collins
Evan L. Crowe, Jr.
Thomas R. Downs
Charles D. Doyle
Robert H. Durr
William K. Harned
Ronald E. Hibbs
Jerry T. Janes
Francis L. Johnson
Joseph E. Keeling
Julian V. Lewis, Jr.
William F. Osborne
Charles T. Raisor
Stanley G. Stone
Bobby E. Stumph
William E. Welch, Jr.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

The Battalion submitted the following After-Action Report concerning the battle:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 2D BATTALION, 138TH ARTILLERY
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96308

AVIIA-S2

7 July 1969

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Attack on FB TOMAHAWK

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding sapper techniques used in the attack on Fire Base TOMAHAWK on 19 June 1969.

2. Fire Base TOMAHAWK is located just off National Highway #1, 19 miles southeast of Hue, South Vietnam and 18 miles northwest of Da Nang, South Vietnam. (Grid ZD11710124: ref map sheet 6641 IV, 1:50,000). The FB was occupied by Battery C, 2D Battalion, 138th FA and a platoon (minus) from Company C, 2D Battalion, 501st Infantry.

3. At approximately 190145 June 1969, FB TOMAHAWK was attacked by a NVA Sapper Unit. It is believed that the attack was organized and executed as follows: (Note: Refer to figure #1 for referenced positions).

a. The attackers approached the perimeter from positions W, X, Y, and Z. The enemy was able to slip under or through the perimeter wire at the above positions without being detected, due in part to the heavy rain from 182000 to 182200 June 1969. Trip flares at positions X, Y, and Z were tied off. Concertina wire was cut at positions W, Y, and Z. A long bamboo pole was used to raise the wire at position X. It is believed that some sappers were inside the perimeter hiding under the cover of darkness before the attack actually started.

b. The attack started in the vicinity of the mess hall - maintenance area (positions B & C). A member of C/2/138 FA went to the mess hall for something to eat. He discovered the enemy in the mess hall stealing food. The soldier ran back to gun #4 to warn the section. As he entered the personnel bunker of gun section 4 an explosion occurred vicinity of the maintenance tent (position C). The explosion was also observed by a member of the Fire Direction Center who was outside the Fire Direction Center Bunker (position F) starting a generator. Battalion Headquarters, 2/138 FA and 2/501 Inf were notified that the FB was receiving incoming mortars. The Command Post Bunker and Communication Bunker were hit next with RPG rounds. RPG rounds were also being received vicinity of guns #2, 4, and 6. The rounds appeared to be coming into the battery position from three directions. The men thought it was a mortar attack. Therefore, off-duty personnel remained inside their personnel bunkers. Personnel on the howitzers got inside the turret and buttoned up. Battalion Fire Direction Center was notified that the battery was under a heavy mortar attack. Defensive artillery fire and illumination was requested. ARA and Spooky were subsequently requested.

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7 July 1969

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Attack on FB TOMAHAWK

c. The Executive Officer's Post ordered the howitzers to fire their countermortar plan. Gun #1 was to fire self illumination. This plan covered the area around the FB 500-3000 meters out. The Chief of Firing Battery fired a hand flare from the Executive Officer's Post to illuminate the gun position area. Incoming rounds were immediately received at the Executive Officer's Post. Perimeter bunkers #A4 and A5 opened fire with 50 caliber machine guns. RPG rounds subsequently knocked them out. Seconds later, sappers were observed throwing satchel charges in and around the Command Post Bunker, Communication Bunker and Executive Officer's Post (positions A, H, and G). Communications at the Executive Officer's Post was knocked out by a satchel charge. The guns continued to fire the countermortar plan. As each gun fired, the sappers fired back with RPGs. Guns #1, 3, 4, and 5 received direct hits with RPGs which knocked them out of action. Gun positions #2 and 6 received heavy RPG fire but continued to fire. The enemy overran positions I5 and I6, simultaneously with the attack on the Command Post and maintenance mess area. After overrunning positions I5 and I6, the enemy occupied position T. The firing battery position at FB TOMAHAWK is located in a saddle between two hill tops. By knocking out the above perimeter bunkers, the enemy was able to command the high ground south of the FB and bombard the battery position with RPGs.

d. The sappers moving under the RPG fire were able to knock out the Command Post Bunker, Communications Bunker and Executive Officer's Post Bunker. Off-duty personnel and Fire Direction Center personnel realized that they were under a sapper attack at this point and took up fighting positions in and around their bunkers and gun positions. Sappers were killed by small arms fire and grenade fragments at the following positions:

- (1) Three KIA vicinity of gun #1.
- (2) One KIA vicinity of position A2.
- (3) One KIA vicinity of position C.
- (4) One KIA vicinity of position S.
- (5) Two KIA vicinity of position I6.
- (6) One KIA vicinity of position I.

c. ARA arrived at the FB and started firing at enemy locations on the perimeter and the hills north of the FB. Preplanned defensive fires requested from Battery C, 1ST Bn, 83D FA and Battery B, 1ST Bn, 321ST FA, (8-inch and 105mm units located at FB ROY) were fired on the mountain northeast of the FB. At approximately 0230 hours, the enemy fired a green flare vicinity of position I5. The green flare is believed to have been a signal for the sappers to withdraw. Action inside the perimeter quietened down. A few minutes later on the far southeast side of the perimeter, some individuals were seen by personnel from gun section #5 moving up the hillside toward position I6. The individuals were wearing helmets and

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thought to be US. The individuals were not fired on for this reason. Subsequently, it was believed they were NVA sapper personnel wearing US helmets.

f. Spooky arrived at the FB at approximately 0230 hours. ARA was subsequently released. Spooky fired at the enemy's withdrawal routes south, east, and west of FB TOMAHAWK.

g. A squad was formed to sweep the battery area in case some sappers were left behind. The sweep was made under illumination provided by a flare ship. Other personnel immediately picked up the wounded which were medevaced to Phu Bai hospitals for treatment.

4. A sweep of the area outside the FB perimeter at first light revealed 5 NVA KIAs at position M. An NVA WIA was captured at position N. One NVA KIA was found vicinity position O and another vicinity position P.

5. The perimeter at FB TOMAHAWK consisted of a single row of triple strand concertina wire with guard bunkers positioned at points A1 thru A5 and I1 thru I6. Each bunker had trip flares, claymore mines and fougasse positioned at various points along the perimeter. The perimeter guards had fired M-79 H & I rounds before the attack, but due to the rain and darkness no guards on the perimeter saw the sappers before the attack started.

6. The PW captured vicinity of the FB revealed that the FB was reconnoitered by a NVA recon team on 14 June 1969. He also stated that a sand table model of the FB was made and each member of the sapper unit planned and practiced the attack.

7. Enemy Losses:

NVA KIA 16

NVA PW 1

8. Equipment Captured:

2 ea RPG-2 launchers

10 ea RPG-2 rounds

3 ea AK47 assault rifles

10 ea AK47 magazines

300 ea AK47 rounds

2 ea flare pistols

Approximately 40 lbs satchel charges

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Small quantity of miscellaneous medical supplies and personal clothing.

9. Friendly Losses:

US KIA	Arty	9
	Inf	4
US WIA	Arty	37
	Inf	13

10. Equipment Damaged:

4 ea M109 SP Howitzer	1 ea M79 grenade launcher
3 ea M548 Cargo Carrier	1 ea M60 machine gun
3 ea 2 1/2 ton cargo trucks	1 ea pistol caliber 45
2 ea 3/4 ton cargo trucks	12 ea M16A1 rifles
1 ea 1 1/2 ton cargo trailer	

Numerous articles of individual clothing, records and personal articles.

11. Conclusions:

a. The sapper units objective was to knock out the Command Post, Control installations and artillery pieces on the fire base.

b. The attack was preplanned and executed according to plan.

c. Weather conditions were not a factor during the attack, but were initially an advantage to the enemy in gaining access to the battery position area.

d. The bunkers as shown on figure #1 were spaced too far apart for proper coverage of the perimeter.

~~✓~~ e. The battery's inability to immediately recognize the type of attack the FB was under, initially aided the enemy.

f. Loss of wire communications to the guns and other vital installations hampered the battery's ability to quickly react to the attack.

g. After the battery became aware of the type of attack it was under, the battery personnel were able to defend themselves and inflict casualties.

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h. Employment of countermortar and artillery defensive fires prevented a complete overrun of the FB.

i. Internal fighting positions are a must in order to adequately defend battery installations once the enemy has penetrated the perimeter defense.

12. Corrective Actions Taken:

a. Fighting Positions: A system of two man fighting positions located around each gun position, Fire Direction Center, Command Post and Executive Officer's Post and other firing battery installations has been implemented. These fighting positions are interconnected by trenches to facilitate access from personnel bunkers. Concertina wire is also being placed around gun positions and on top of bunkers. Small bunkers with trenches connected to fighting holes are being employed along the perimeter in lieu of large bunker complexes. All fighting positions are being built so that machine guns have a grazing fire capability. By utilizing the trenches to move into fighting positions, movement above ground and exposure to fire is minimized.

b. Communications: All batteries have been instructed to maintain alternate communication lines with the Executive Officer's Post, Fire Direction Center, both infantry and artillery Command Post Bunkers, and perimeter bunkers. Therefore, if one installation is knocked out, another can take charge of the guns and perimeter bunkers. A flare signal system will be maintained in the battery at all times.

c. Employment of Aerial Artillery: Marking of perimeter bunkers and enemy targets during the hours of darkness are necessary before ARA and Spooky can effectively fire. All batteries have been instructed to maintain smudge pots or some type of light at each bunker to mark perimeter bunkers for ARA and/or Spooky gun ships. Machine gun tracer fire, flares or M79 WP rounds will be used to mark enemy targets.

d. Night Vision Aids: In order to assist perimeter guards in early detection of the enemy, two AN/PVS-3 Night Vision Sights have been obtained and issued to the battery.

13. Lessons Learned:

a. Situation: The attackers knocked out the battery Command Post and Executive Officer's Post early during the attack. Therefore, the guns were left without communications.

Recommendation: That alternate wire lines be installed between the Executive Officer's Post, Fire Direction Center, guns and Command Posts. Lines should also be dug in. Therefore, if one installation is knocked out, other installations can take command.

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b. Situation: When the enemy gets inside the perimeter, perimeter bunkers, perimeter claymores and fougasse are of little value.

Recommendation: That all FB personnel have two-man fighting positions with trenches connected to their sleeping bunkers. The fighting positions should be located around the gun pits, bunkers and equipment. Concertina wire should also be placed throughout the battery area including the top of bunkers.

c. Situation: During a mortar attack, battalion policy requires on-duty gun crews to get inside the turret, button up and fire counter-mortar plans or other fire missions as directed. Since on-duty crews were inside their respective howitzers, no one was outside the howitzer in a position to fight and observe for sappers and RPGs.

Recommendation: One individual should stay outside the howitzer during the initial phase of an attack to observe for ground/sapper attack. This person can also warn off-duty personnel of enemy activity in the area.

d. Situation: Because the bunker line could not be definitely identified from the air, ARA and Spooky were unable to fire on targets immediately upon arrival at the FB.

Recommendation: Each bunker have a flashlight or smudge pot for marking location of bunkers. Enemy targets can also be marked with flares and machine gun tracer fire.

e. Situation: Communication lines to perimeter bunkers were run to the Executive Officer's Post. When the Executive Officer's Post was knocked out direct communication with perimeter bunkers was lost. A back-up flare system had to be used.

Recommendation: Alternate communication lines should be laid to all bunkers with an alternate installation designated to control bunkers in case Executive Officer's Post is knocked out. Communications with perimeter bunkers is essential in marking bunker lines for ARA and Spooky gun ships and immediate notification of perimeter enemy activity. A system of flare signals should also be incorporated into the alert warning system for attacks.

f. Situation: Some off-duty personnel took up fighting positions with only their shorts on. Since some sappers were dressed in shorts and others were naked, it was difficult to tell which persons were US.

Recommendation: Personnel should take up fighting positions with helmets, flak jackets and uniform on for their own protection as well as for identification by others.

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g. Situation: Communication lines between the infantry platoon Command Post and the battery were knocked out when the switch board and the Executive Officer's Post was knocked out.

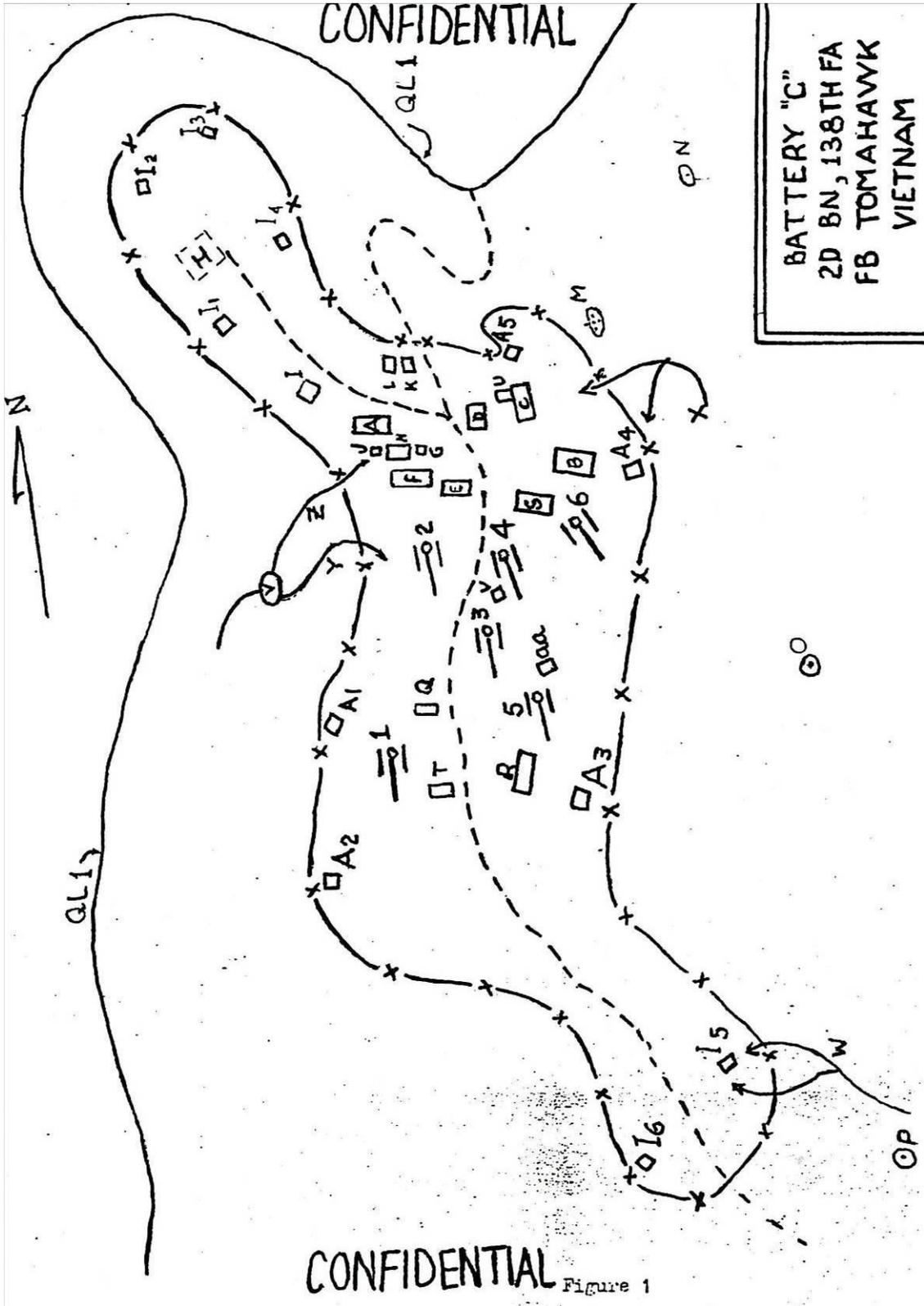
Recommendation: An alternate line between the infantry platoon Command Post and the battery Fire Direction Center be installed.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

S. T. McCLURE
CPT, FA
Adjutant

DISTRIBUTION:

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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

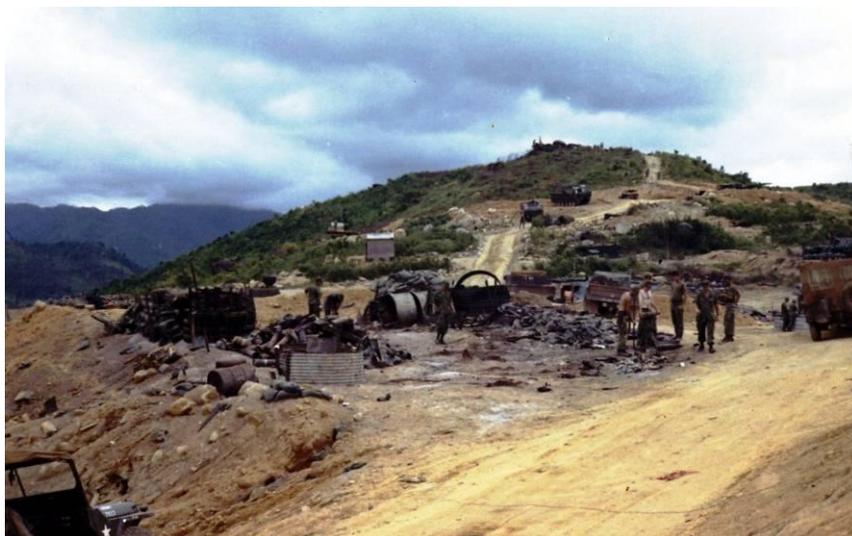
LEGEND

<u>INDEX</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>INDEX</u>	<u>POSITION</u>
A	Artillery Command Post Bunker	J	Personnel Bunker
A1	Perimeter Bunker	K	Personnel Bunker
A2	Perimeter Bunker	L	Personnel Bunker
A3	Perimeter Bunker	M	Five NVA KIA
A4	Perimeter Bunker	N	One NVA PW
A5	Perimeter Bunker	O	One NVA KIA
B	Mess Hall	P	One NVA KIA
C	Maintenance Tent	Q	Personnel Bunker
D	Medic Bunker	R	Motor Park
E	Personnel Bunker Gun #2	S	Personnel Bunker
F	Fire Direction Center Bunker	T	M577 Command Post Carr
G	Executive Officer's Post	U	Personnel Bunker
H	Communications Bunker	V	Personnel Bunker
I	Perimeter Bunker	W	Sapper Attack Route
I1	Perimeter Bunker	X	Sapper Attack Route
I2	Perimeter Bunker	Y	Sapper Attack Route
I3	Perimeter Bunker	Z	Sapper Attack Route
I4	Perimeter Bunker	aa	Personnel Bunker
I5	Perimeter Bunker		
I6	Perimeter Bunker		

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Following the attack on FSB Tomahawk, the morning after.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



The telling and re-telling of what occurred on FSB Tomahawk has been a constant over the years, from articles in newspapers, and magazines, to Jim Wilson’s 1994 book, “The Sons of Bardstown.”

The early morning hours of 19 June 1969, is a part of the history of the 2nd Battalion, the Kentucky National Guard and City of Bardstown. For the men who fought and those who died there, and their families, memories of the battle at Tomahawk and its aftermath continue to haunt them. Below is a copy of an article from the May 2010 edition of VFW Magazine.¹³



The five Kentucky National Guardsmen killed on June 19, 1969, at Firebase Tomahawk were 1st Sgt. Luther M. Chappel, Spec. 4 David B. Collins, Staff Sgt. James T. Moore, Spec. 4 Joseph R. McIlvoy and Spec. 4 Ronald E. Simpson.



A memorial located on the courthouse grounds in Bardstown, Ky., lists the names of Kentucky National Guardsmen killed in Vietnam.

National Guard's Deadliest Days in Vietnam

By The Editors

The two National Guard artillery battalions that served in Vietnam in 1969 experienced the deadliest single-action losses of the war for citizen-soldier units. The homecoming for these casualties caused an outpouring of public emotion in Bardstown, Ky., and Manchester, N.H.

Infusion was the byword when it came to the National Guard during the Vietnam War. It was a policy designed to prevent too many men from the same hometown from dying in a single action from the same unit. However, in two instances, it was unable to avert fate.

The Army National Guard's single deadliest actions of the Vietnam War came in the summer of 1969. On June 19, C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery (Kentucky National Guard), was stationed at Firebase Tomahawk.

Perched atop a saddle-shaped hill astride Highway 1, 19 miles southeast of Hue, it was a prime enemy target. "This is a terrible place to be," recalled one officer when he first saw it. Besides the 70-man artillery battery—90% of whom originally hailed from the Bardstown area of Kentucky—the firebase was manned by an 18-man platoon from C Co., 2nd Bn., 501st Inf., 101st Abn. Div.

At 1:30 a.m., the 72nd Sapper Company of the North Vietnamese Army's (NVA) 4th Regiment attacked, quickly breaching the perimeter. "During the first 15 or 20 minutes, I didn't think we were gonna make it," Ronnie Hibbs remembered. It would be a tough night indeed for the citizen-soldiers.

"Seems like we fought for hours and hours," Reuben Simpson said, "but it really wasn't that long. When I went out at first light, I was amazed at what little was left. The whole hill was just about gone."

An estimated 150 enemy rocket-propelled grenades and satchel charges had destroyed three howitzers (and disabled one), an ammo storage area, nine bunkers, the mess hall, the dining tent, a maintenance area, four ammo carriers and three jeeps.

Of the nine artillerymen killed, four were actually active-duty soldiers infused into the Kentucky battery. One of the five Kentuckians was killed by "friendly fire." Another, Sgt. James Moore, died of painful burns five days later on June 24 aboard a hospital ship. Four of the Guardsmen called Bardstown home; the other was from Carrollton. A total of 37 Guardsmen were wounded. The 101st platoon lost four KIA and 13 WIA. Some 18 NVA sapper bodies were counted.

Though Bardstown, population 5,000, is sometimes referred to as suffering the highest per capita loss of the war (its surrounding area sustained 17 killed), that dubious distinction actually belongs to Beallsville, Ohio. With only 475 residents, it sacrificed six of its sons.

Of Battery C's original 117 members, 85 were married. It enlisted seven sets of brothers, plus many cousins. Their fallen

28 • VFW • May 2010

¹³ Reprinted through the courtesy of the editors of VFW Magazine.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Five New Hampshire National Guardsmen were killed on Aug. 26, 1969, when their vehicle hit a land mine. They were Sgt. Gaetan J. Beaudoin, Sgt. Guy A. Blanchette, Staff Sgt. Richard E. Genest, Sgt. 1st Class Richard P. Raymond and Sgt. Roger E. Robichaud.



NEW HAMPSHIRE

*Ranks include posthumous promotions.

comrades, as well as other area residents killed, are honored by two monuments on the town's Courthouse Square.

"Bardstown would become a symbol of how deep into America the war had reached, and few, if any, communities in this land felt the impact of the war as did the people here," wrote Jim Wilson, author of *The Sons of Bardstown: 25 Years of Vietnam in an American Town*.

Manchester Mourns

Far to the northeast in New Hampshire, the 94,000 people of this mid-sized city may have taken exception to that statement. Manchester was home base to the 3rd Bn., 197th Artillery (New Hampshire National Guard).

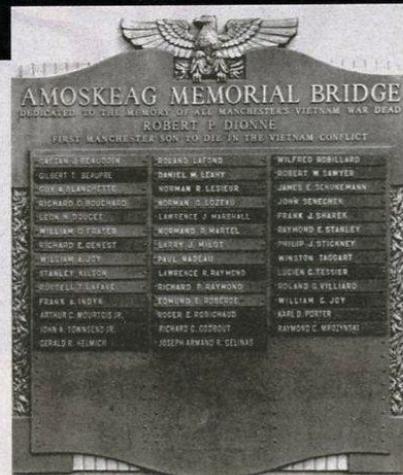
The battalion sent 506 soldiers to Vietnam, 80% of whom were married. Many of the men were of French-Canadian descent who attended the same schools and churches. Some lived on the same streets in the same West Side neighborhood. Some were not even U.S. citizens.

Once in Vietnam, 70% were "infused," or dispersed to regular Army units. No matter where they were stationed, actions on the home-front were felt keenly. CWO Albert Lahaie of Service Battery wrote in a letter published in the *Manchester Union Leader*: "We feel that the publicity at home has been focused so intensely on those who have not accepted their duty that by accepting ours, we have been forgotten."

On Aug. 26, five men of A Battery were on their way to regroup in Long Binh before heading home. About 32 miles from Saigon, their vehicle hit a 40-pound land mine on Highway 13, known as "Thunder Road."

"They were within sight of Lai Khe Base Camp," said Joe Comroe. "I was there, and witnessed the explosion, which blew the 5-ton truck they were riding in nearly 100 feet in the air."

When the men's bodies were returned home, 2,000 mourners turned



The Amoskeag Memorial Bridge honors 34 servicemen from Manchester, N.H., who died during the Vietnam War. This plaque now stands in front of the Manchester Armory.

Glimpse of Guard in Vietnam

About 9,000 Army National Guard soldiers served in Vietnam as mobilized unit members, individual volunteers or reassignees. Some 106 of the mobilized soldiers died there. (Eight mobilized Air National Guard airmen were KIA, too.)

Eight intact Army NG units were sent to Vietnam, including the two artillery battalions mentioned and the 116th Combat Engineer Battalion (Idaho ANG).

The only National Guard infantry unit in-country was Indiana's D Company (Ranger), 151st Infantry. Operating out of a base near Long Binh, D Company's 172 Guardsmen (plus 32 regulars) carried out long-range recon patrols. It suffered two KIA and 100 WIA during its 1969 tour.

A study done by National Guard historian John Listman shows that the Kansas National Guard lost the most men in Vietnam. Of its 29 dead, 26 were KIA and three died of non-hostile causes. Twenty of the KIA were from the 137th Infantry.

The 133rd Infantry (Iowa) was next with 12 KIA, followed by the 299th Infantry (Hawaii) with 10 KIA. But keep in mind that all these Guardsmen died as individuals assigned to regular Army units in Vietnam.

Two officers who volunteered from Guard units were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

out. The five flag-draped coffins were too much for family members to bear. (Four of the five were married.) "The moans and sobs of relatives were heard above the silence," according to the *New Hampshire Sunday News*. City officials called it the "saddest place, the saddest day in the city's history."

Veterans of the 197th held a 40th anniversary reunion last year, as they had done earlier. The deaths of those fellow unit members are never far from their thoughts. As Roy Hughes said, "Part of all of us is in those cemeteries in Manchester—and always will be." ★

E-mail rkolb@vfw.org

Editor's Note: I would like to extend a special thanks to New Hampshire National Guard historian CWO 2 Thomas Graham, National Guard contract historian John Listman and Kentucky National Guard historian John Trowbridge for their invaluable assistance in compiling this article.

**THE PEOPLE, PLACES AND LANDSCAPE OF VIETNAM AS SEEN
THROUGH THE EYES OF KENTUCKY NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS**



VIETNAMESE MORNING

Curt Bennett

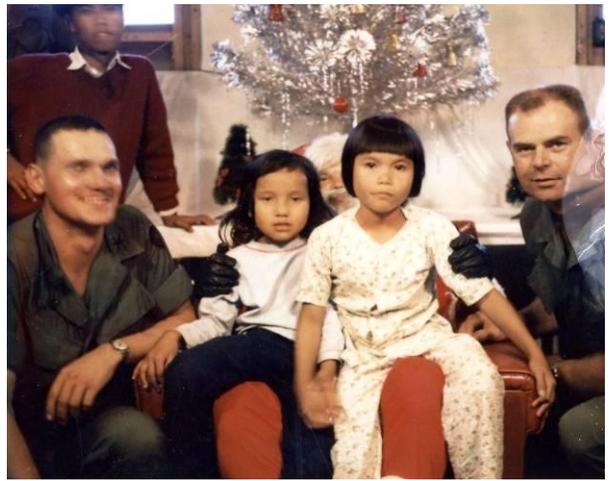
Before war starts
In early morning
The land is breath taking.
The low, blazing, ruby sun
Melts the night-shadow pools
Creating an ethereal appearance.
Each miniature house and tree
Sprouts its, long, thin shadow
Stretching long on dewy ground.
The countryside is panoramic maze,
Jungle, hamlets, hills and waterways,
Bomb-craters, paddies, broken-backed bridges.

Rice fields glow sky-sheens,
Flat, calm, mirrored lakes
Reflect the morning peace.
The patchwork quilted earth,
Slashed by snaking tree-lines,
Slumbers in dawn's blue light.

Sharp, rugged mountain peaks
Sleep in a soft rolling blanket
Of clinging, slippery, misty fog.
Effortlessly, languidly, it flows
Shyly spreading wispy tentacles out
To embrace the earth with velvet arms.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

The People



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



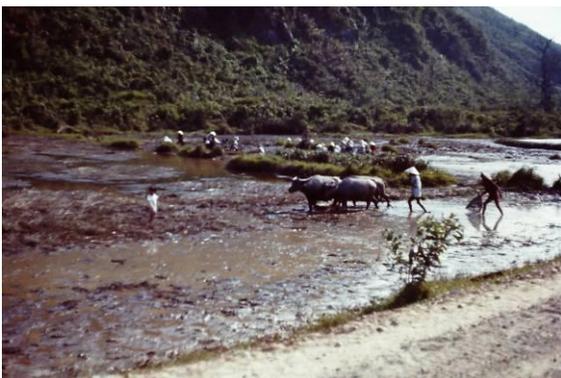
KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



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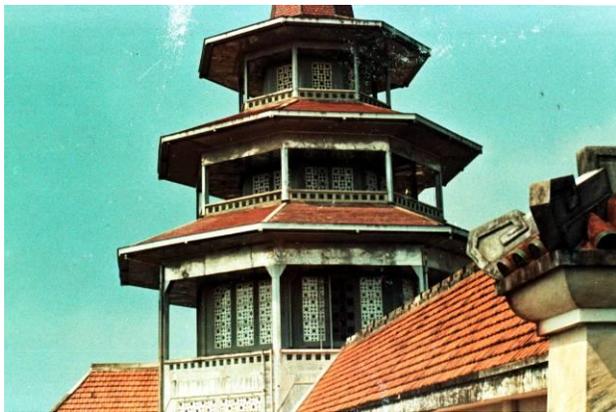


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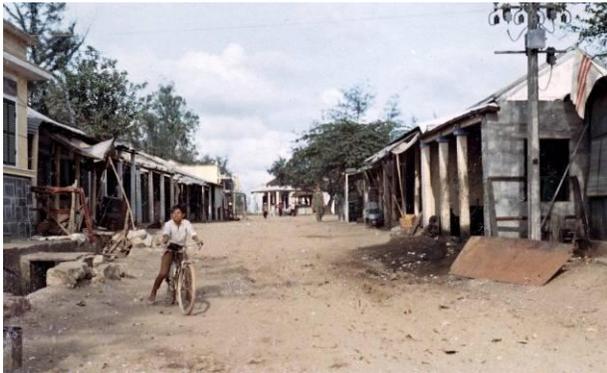


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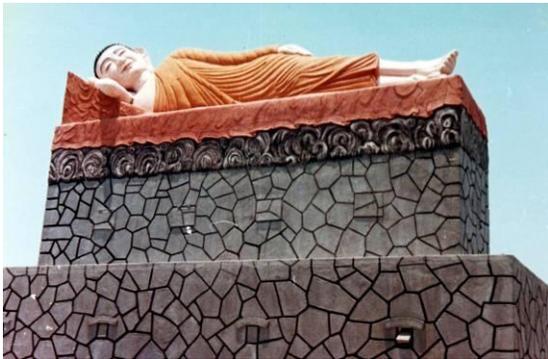
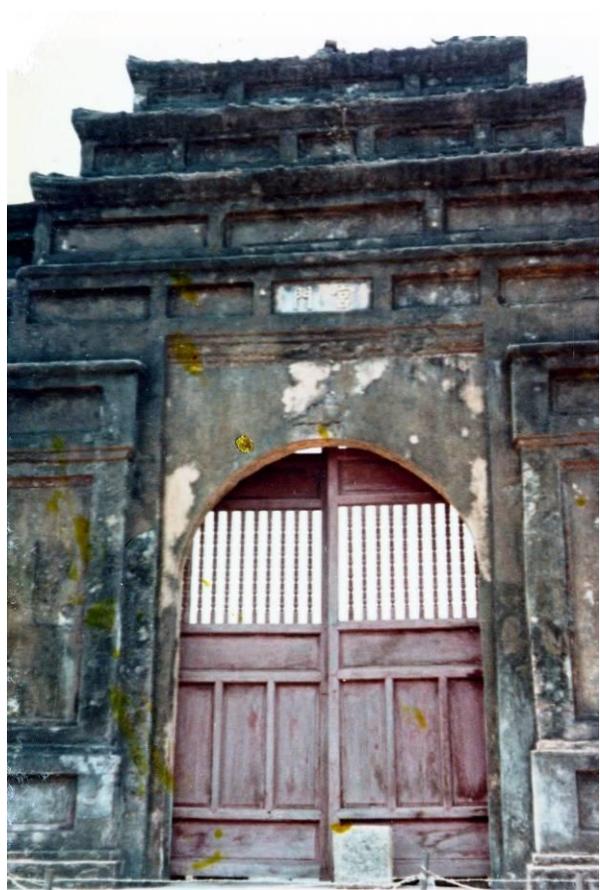
The Places



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



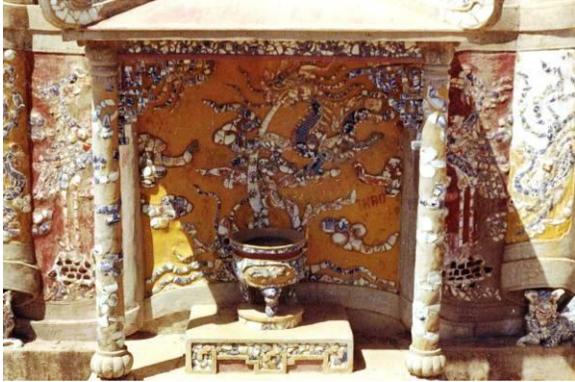
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KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

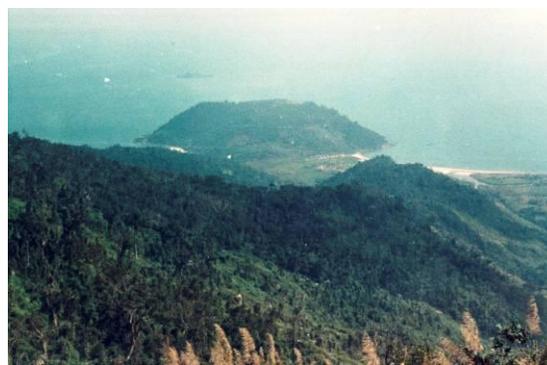


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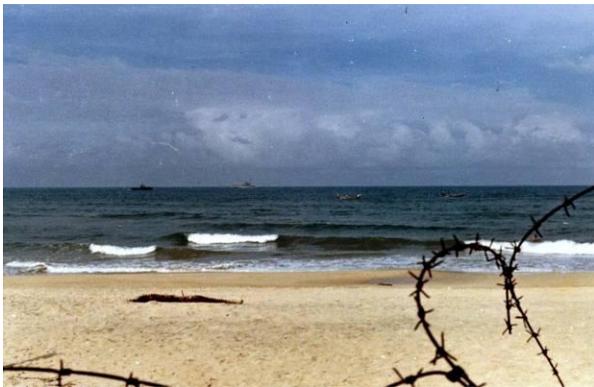


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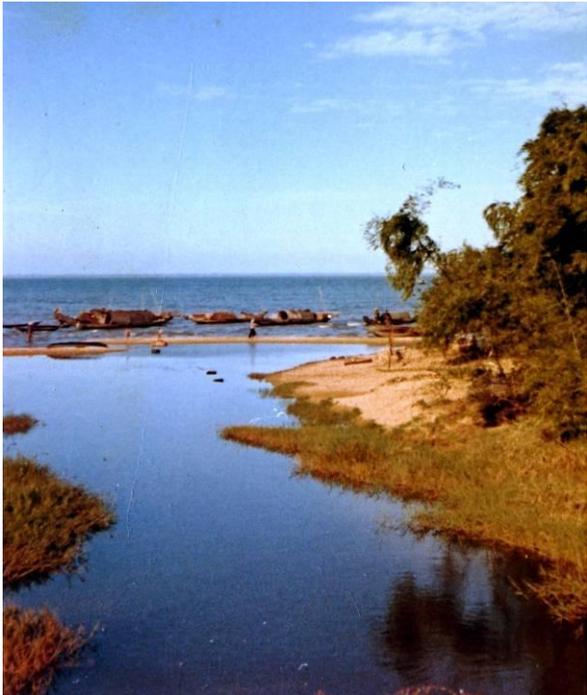
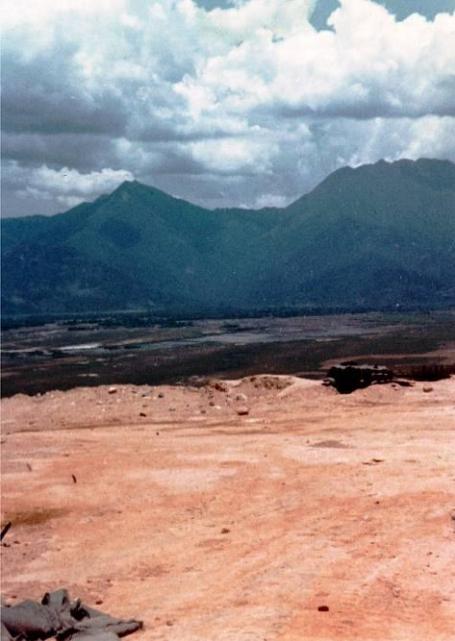
The Landscape



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



VIP VISITS

**MAJOR GENERAL FRANCIS L. GREENLEAF
Deputy Chief, National Guard Bureau**

On 9 December 1968, Major General Francis L. Greenleaf visited the men of the Second Battalion in Vietnam.



MG Greenleaf and BG Pixton.



MG Greenleaf and LTC Cundiff.



MG Greenleaf shakes hands with members of B Battery's Gun #6.

MG Greenleaf speaks to the members of B Battery.



MAJOR GENERAL LARRY C. DAWSON
The Adjutant General for Kentucky

In early January 1969, The Adjutant General, Major General Larry C. Dawson visited the battalion.¹⁴ At the time, General Dawson reported the men in high spirits, doing their assignment with enthusiasm and that they had the respect of every unit which they supported.

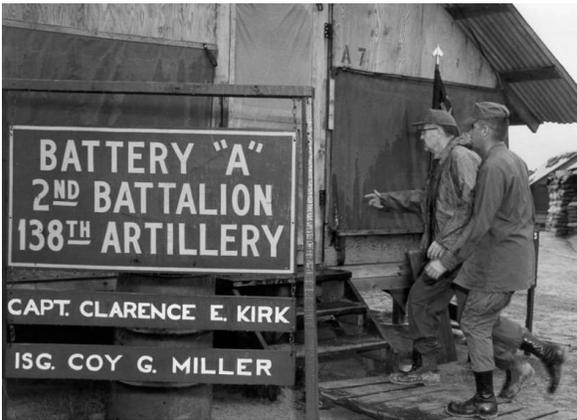
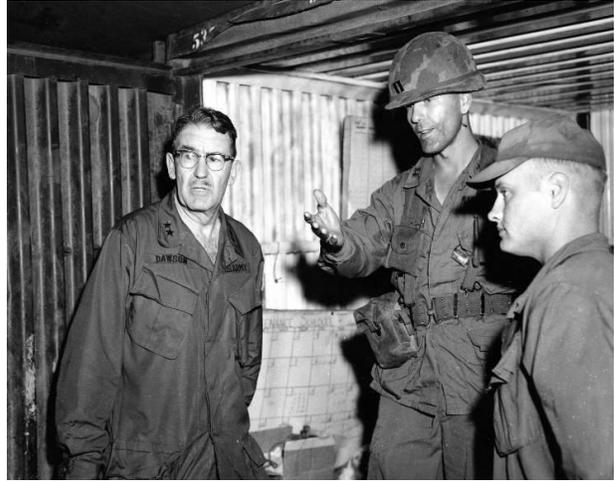


Arrival of MG Dawson at Phu Bai Airfield. (l-r) LTC Robert Cundiff, MG Dawson, and BG Pixton. MAJ Robert James is in the background.



¹⁴ Dawson, Larry C., 201 file, Kentucky Military Records and Research Branch. Dawson was on orders for the Vietnam visit, 11-21 January 1969. MG Dawson was appointed Adjutant General of Kentucky on 15 November 1968, serving until November 1971. *The State Journal*, 12 January 1969, p. 11, c. 1-3.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



JANET HATFIELD
Miss Kentucky 1968

Janet Hatfield, Miss Kentucky 1968, of Jeffersonville, Kentucky, visited the battalion on 12 August 1969, during her tour with Miss America. Miss Hatfield was presented with a plaque commemorating her visit. The Mess Section baked a cake for the celebration.¹⁵



LTC Spradlin presents plaque to Miss Kentucky Janet Hatfield.



SGM Kirk with Janet Hatfield.



Miss Kentucky hams it up with SP4 Dennis Hatfield (HHB).



Miss Kentucky talks with SP5 David Stephens (A Btry), left, and SP5 Joseph Mudd (SVC Btry).

¹⁵ *The Kentucky Guardsman*, October 1969, p. 3. Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs of Miss Hatfield's visit are courtesy of MRRB, Frankfort.

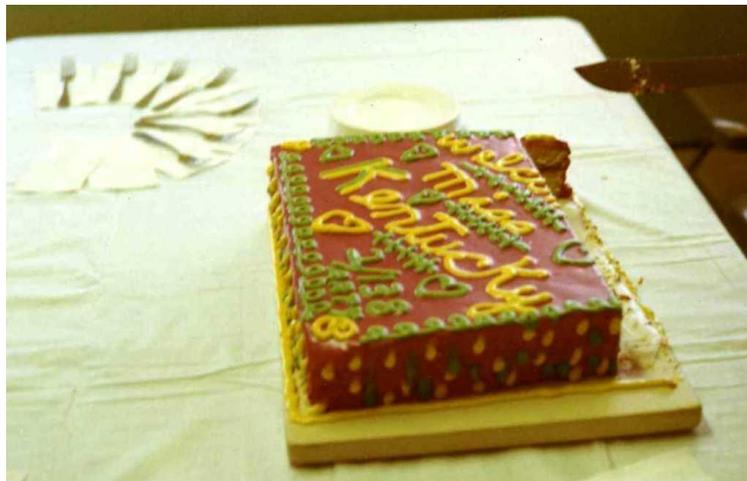
KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Miss Kentucky shakes hands with PFC Gary M. Arnold.



Cake made for Miss Kentucky, Janet Hatfield. (Don Parrish)



ROLL OF HONOR

(Listed chronologically by date of death)

Sergeant Bertram A. Carr

Sergeant Bertram A. "Sonny" Carr, Louisville, Kentucky, of B Battery, 2nd Battalion 138th Field Artillery was killed in Vietnam on 1 June 1969 near Hamburger Hill. He was originally a member of Service Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery. Sergeant Carr's name appears on Panel 23W, Line 35, on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C. Additionally, PFC Billy W. Campbell, a regular Army soldier infused into B Battery was also killed in this action.



Staff Sergeant Harold M. Brown

Staff Sergeant Harold Milton Brown, Mt. Washington, Kentucky, formerly C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery was killed by rocket fire while in a bunker in Chu Lai while serving with C Battery, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, Americal Division on 11 June 1969 in Vietnam. Staff Sergeant Brown's name appears on Panel 22W, Line 17, on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C.

First Sergeant Luther M. Chappel

First Sergeant Luther M. Chappel, Worthville, Kentucky, of C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery was killed on 19 June 1969 at Fire Support Base TOMAHAWK in Vietnam. First Sergeant Chappel's name appears on Panel 22W, Line 86, on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C.



Specialist Fourth Class David B. Collins

Specialist Fourth Class David B. Collins, Bardstown, Kentucky, of C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery was killed on 19 June 1969 at Fire Support Base TOMAHAWK in Vietnam. Specialist Collins' name appears on Panel 22W, Line 87, on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C.

Sergeant James T. Moore

Sergeant James T. Moore, Bardstown, Kentucky, of C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery was killed on 19 June 1969 at Fire Support Base TOMAHAWK in Vietnam. Sergeant Moore's name appears on Panel 21W, Line 09, on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C.



Private First Class Joseph R. McIlvoy

Private First Class Joseph R. McIlvoy, Mackville, Kentucky, of C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery was killed on 19 June 1969 at Fire Support Base TOMAHAWK in Vietnam. Private McIlvoy's name appears on Panel 22W, Line 91, on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C.

Specialist Fourth Class Ronald E. Simpson

Specialist Fourth Class Ronald E. Simpson, Bardstown, Kentucky, of C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery was killed on 19 June 1969 at Fire Support Base TOMAHAWK in Vietnam. Specialist Simpson's name appears on Panel 22W, Line 94, on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C.



Military funeral conducted for SP4 Ronald E. Simpson. Funeral procession into Bardstown High School, 4 July 1969. Photograph courtesy of The Kentucky Standard, Bardstown, Ky.



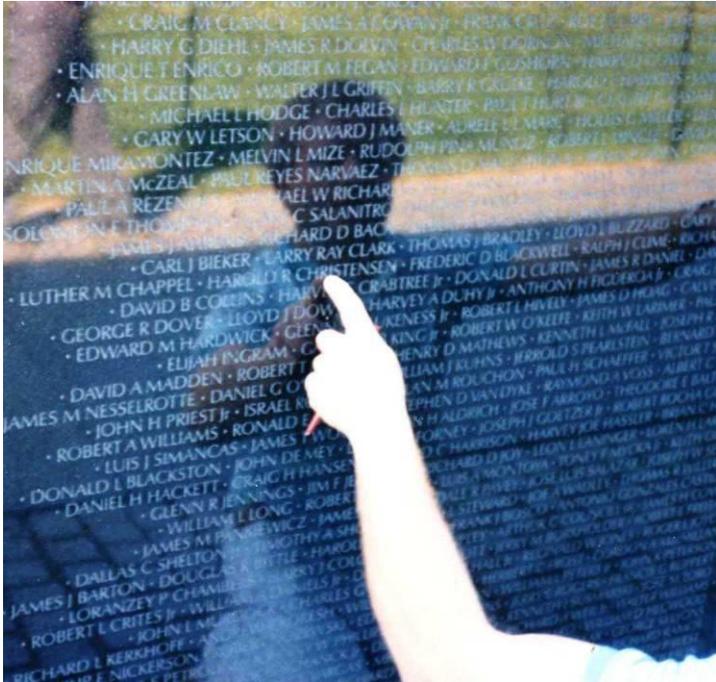
Sergeant James Allen Wray

Sergeant James Allen Wray, formerly C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, was killed on 2 July 1969 in Vietnam while serving with B Battery, 1st Battalion, 40th Field Artillery, 108th Artillery Group. Sergeant Wray's name appears on Panel 21W, Line 49, on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C.

McIlvoy, Simpson, Collins, Moore and Chappel, members of "C" Battery, 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, were killed on June 19, 1969 when Firebase TOMAHAWK in Vietnam was attacked during the early morning hours in a pouring rain by North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers. Sappers infiltrated the base and during the attack threw some 150 satchel charges into the bunkers in addition to firing rocket propelled grenades. The battle went on some two hours before the NVA were forced to retreat. The attack destroyed an ammunition storage area, four of the six M-109 self-propelled howitzers, nine bunkers, the mess hall, dining tent, maintenance building, four ammunition carriers, three 2 1/2-ton trucks, two 3/4-ton trucks, and three jeeps. The Battery had nine men killed; five of them were from Bardstown and the other four (SP4 Troy Bethea, SP4 William J. Kuhns, SGT Harold R. Christensen II, SGT Larry W. Kinder) were non-Guard replacements from various, non-Kentucky locations. The unit also suffered 37 wounded. A platoon of infantrymen from the 101st Airborne Division was providing perimeter security for the firebase and four of the 101st soldiers were killed and another 13 wounded.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Kent Bischoff points to the names of Luther M. Chappel and David Collins engraved on the wall of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D. C. during the 1995, trip to Vietnam.

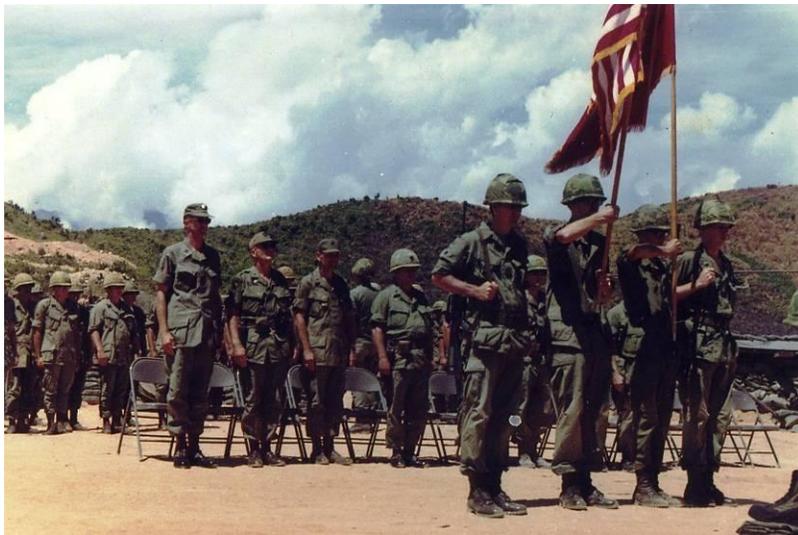
Vietnam Veterans Memorial



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Memorial Service for C Battery personnel killed in the attack on FSB TOMAHAWK.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Memorial Service for Captain Lyle J. Thompson. Captain Thompson served as Commander of C Battery from 4 December 1968 to his death on 6 March 1969. Thompson was a native of St. Paul, MN. He was killed when the helicopter he was riding in was hit by enemy ground fire and crashed in Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam. Captain Thompson's name appears at panel 30W, line 060, on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.



Officers of C Battery, Captain Thompson is on the left.



Chapter Four
BACK TO THE BLUEGRASS



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Following the completion of their tour of duty in Vietnam the battalion began arriving at Shewmaker Air National Guard Base in Louisville, in the early morning hours of Saturday, 11 October.

Upon arrival the men were given leave and told to report to Fort Knox for out-processing on 13 October 1969. Prior to their departure from Fort Knox a brief ceremony was conducted bidding the men goodbye and expressing appreciation for their active duty service with the Army.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, FIRST UNITED STATES ARMY
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755

LA GO 491

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 491

13 October 1969
UUI A 1 1969

RELEASE FROM ACTIVE DUTY

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S
OFFICE - KENTUCKY

TC 999. Release of Units from Active Duty.

By direction of the President and pursuant to authority contained in Headquarters, Department of the Army message, dated 14 July 1969, subject: Release of Reserve Component Units, the following unit(s), together with members thereof, are released from active duty as of 2400 hours on the effective date indicated and the unit(s) revert(s) to Reserve Status at home station as of 0001 hours of the following day:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>UIC</u>	<u>TRANSFER STATION</u>	<u>HOME STATION</u>	<u>EFF DATE</u>
2 Bn, 138 Arty	WP4R	Fort Knox, Ky	Louisville, Ky	20 Oct 69

Files/rec: Files will be transferred to the installation records holding area (AR 345-215).

Sp instr: The above unit(s) with members thereof, will be processed for release from active duty and reports rendered in accordance with instructions contained in First US Army Plan for Release of Units and Individuals Ordered to Active Duty under the Reserve Forces Mobilization, May 1968, 18 July 1969.
(AHABC-OR)

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

WILLIAM M. FONDREN
Major General, GS
Chief of Staff

H. M. Thompson
H. M. THOMPSON
Colonel, AGC
Adjutant General

DISTRIBUTION:

A
E(3 only)
H(3 only)
5 - CO, 2/138 Arty
30 - CG, Fort Knox, Ky
10 - CG, USCONARC, ATTN:
ATOPS-TP-TR
2 - CG, USCONARC (ATTN: ATAG)
20 - AHARF
12 - AHABC-OR

SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION:

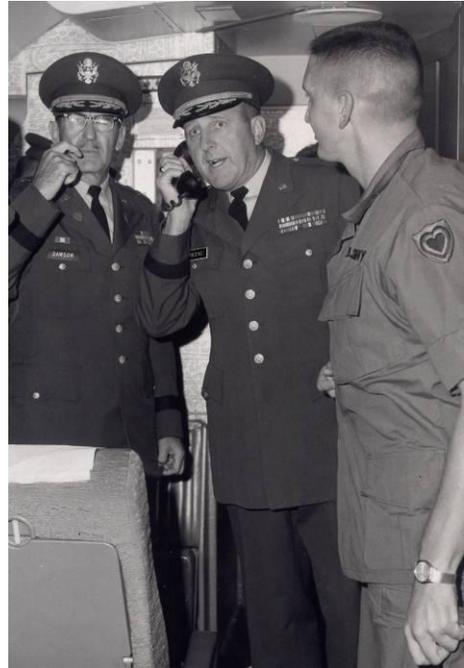
20 - DA, TAGO ATTN: AGSD
3 - DA, Chief, Office of Reserve
Components
3 - DA, Chief, Office of Army
Reserve
3 - DA, Chief, Office of National
Guard Bureau

7262

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Arrival of first flight at Standiford Field.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Arrival of second flight.



From The Kentucky
Guardian – January 1970

A REAL WELCOME HOME—Members of the 2d Bn, 138th Artillery were happily welcomed home on 11 November 69 after spending a year in Vietnam when they arrived at Shewmaker Air National Guard Base in Louisville. The scene above was typical of those available to a photographer as he surveyed the area. (Photo by Ky Dept of Public Information)



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



A welcome home ceremony, for the family and friends of the men of the battalion, sponsored by the Louisville Chamber of Commerce, was held in the East Wing of the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center in Louisville on 19 October. During the ceremony numerous dignitaries spoke, and the Chamber of Commerce presented a plaque to the battalion honoring its service. One of the final events of the ceremony was when Lieutenant Colonel Cundiff, returned the colors of the battalion to State control, thus symbolizing the completion of the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery's tour of duty in the Republic of Vietnam.

On 27 October 1969, the battalion was reconstituted as a National Guard unit.



Plaque presented to 2/138th Field Artillery upon their return from Vietnam. The plaque currently hangs in the Bardstown National Guard Armory, home of Battery C.

Proclamation

by the
Governor
of the

Commonwealth of Kentucky

To All To Whom These Presents Shall Come:

Whereas, Many Kentuckians have served and are serving their country and state on the battlefields of Vietnam; and

Whereas, One such company of men, the 2nd Battalion, 138th Artillery, is scheduled to return to Kentucky after a year of active duty in Vietnam; and

Whereas, These men will bring with them the memory of eight other courageous Kentuckians who belonged to this battalion and who lost their lives on the battlefield of Vietnam during the months of June and July; and

Whereas, This unit is expected to arrive at Standiford Field, Louisville, at 2:00 A.M., on Saturday, October 11,; and

Whereas, Ceremonies will be held in honor of these returning soldiers on October 19 at 3 P.M., in the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center at Louisville;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LOUIE B. NUNN, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, do hereby proclaim the week of October 19-25, 1969, as

2ND BATTALION, 138TH ARTILLERY WEEK

In Kentucky, and urge all citizens to honor these Vietnam Veterans for their service to their country and the pride they bring to our Commonwealth.

Done at the Capitol in the city of Frankfort this 10th day of October in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred sixty-nine and of the Commonwealth of Kentucky the one hundred seventy-eighth.

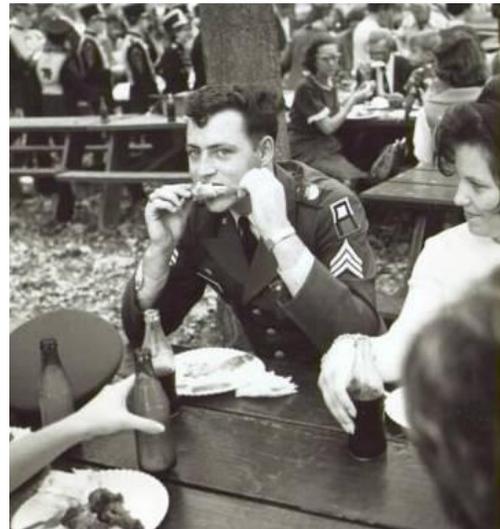
LOUIE B. NUNN, Governor.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

When the units returned to their home stations local celebrations were held to welcome the men back home.



Welcome home ceremony held at the Carrollton National Guard Armory for the men of A Battery. Kenton County Public Library – Northern Kentucky Photographic Archives.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Letters of Appreciation



HEADQUARTERS 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
Office of the Commanding General
APO San Francisco 96383

AVDG-CG

13 October 1969

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

THRU: Commanding General
XXIV Corps
APO 96308

Commanding General
United States Army, Vietnam
APO 96375

Adjutant General, State of Kentucky
Capitol Building
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

TO: Commanding Officer
2d Battalion, 138th Artillery KYARNG
Louisville, Kentucky 40201

1. On behalf of the officers and men of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the outstanding fire support rendered by your battalion to free world forces in Thua Thien Province, during the period 24 October 1968 to 9 October 1969.

AVDG-CG

13 October 1969

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

2. The commendable manner in which your battalion reinforced the fires of the 101st Airborne Division Artillery (Airmobile) contributed significantly to the successful completion of several division operations. The names Nevada Eagle, Kentucky Jumper, Richland Square, and Republic Square can be remembered with pride by the troopers of the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery. Throughout these operations accurate, timely, and effective fires were continuously brought to bear on the enemy. Many times this was accomplished under very adverse and trying conditions.

3. Kentucky, as well as all Americans, can be proud of the outstanding contributions made by the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery, to the cause of peace. The officers and men of your battalion have displayed the utmost in motivation, esprit de corps, and professionalism. They can be justly proud of the enviable record forged on the field of battle as they return to their role of citizen soldiers.

4. I assure you that all the "Screaming Eagles" thank them for their support and wish them well in future endeavors.

JOHN M. WRIGHT, JR.
Major General, USA
Commanding

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



AVHGC

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96375



25 October 1969

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

Commanding Officer
2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery
(155 SP)
Louisville, Kentucky

1. The officers and men of the 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery were called to active duty from their civilian occupations in the Louisville, Kentucky area on 13 May 1968. The efficiency for which your unit had previously been noted was soon displayed on active duty. From your accomplishments as a National Guard unit, through your duty stations with the XXIV Corps, Republic of Vietnam, your professional attitude and high standards of performance were continually maintained.
2. From the time the first rounds were fired on 13 November 1968, the 2d Battalion provided effective and responsive artillery support for the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) in combat operations such as Nevada Eagle, Bristol Boots and Kentucky Jumper. With your firing batteries deployed at various fire support bases such as Anzio, Sam and Tomahawk, your ability to function as a team greatly enhanced the overall support effort in I Corps Tactical Zone and reflected most favorably on the ability of National Guard units to meet effectively the challenges of a combat zone.
3. You departed the United States Army Vietnam on 10 October 1969 to return once again to your civilian lives. The manner in which you performed your duties is highly commendable and is in keeping with the highest traditions of your unit, the State of Kentucky, and the United States Army. I thank you for your efforts, sacrifices, and accomplishments in answering the call to active duty.

Frank T. Mildren

FRANK T. MILDREN
Lieutenant General, US Army
Deputy Commanding General

The following article appeared in the "Letters to the Editor," section of the November-December 1975, edition of Field Artillery Magazine:

2-138th FA

While perusing the "Incoming" portion of the July-August issue, my attention was drawn to "Fire Mission." In response to 1LT Tony R. Fuller, perhaps my firsthand comments can enlighten his thoughts or someone else's for that matter, in regard to the performance of the 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, while in Vietnam.

I was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 83d Field Artillery, which in my estimation was the only outstanding field artillery unit in Vietnam. The main reason for such professional attitudes in our unit was due largely to COL (then LTC) Clifford Worthy Jr. and LTC (then MAJ) Ray L. Spence. In August 1968 our unit was alerted that the 2-138th FA was ready to deploy to Southeast Asia from Fort Hood, TX. Immediately our commander and executive officer started the wheels rolling for proper reception of the unit. The reception plan included the acquisition of real estate, equipment for health and welfare of the unit personnel and pre-stockage of all logistical bases.

The 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, began arriving at Da Nang, Vietnam, in October 1968. Wheeled vehicles were convoyed to Phu Bai, and the tracks were transported by LST to Tammy Bay near Hue. It was immediately apparent that the unit was going to play a very important role in the accomplishment of the combat mission of XXIV Corps. The officers, NCOs and lower ranking EMs were a proud bunch who truly displayed professional leadership and accomplishments. The unit's personnel were very maintenance conscious and proud of their work. Their professional attitude and accomplishments are truly worth mentioning in that they gave us, the sponsor battalion, a run for our money. If at any other time the 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, is recalled to active duty, I would not hesitate one minute to be able to serve with them. As the individual who was the key man in planning and receiving them, I salute with great pride LTC Robert W. Cundiff and his staff for a truly outstanding professional combat performance. The National Guard Bureau and the State of Kentucky should be very proud of the accomplishments of the 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery. Benjamin M. Frias, MSG, USA, HQ, 552d Arty Gp, 1969.

Chapter Five MEMORIALS

Frankfort, Kentucky – Kentucky’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial



Dedication Ceremony, Kentucky’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial, 12 November 1988. BG Cundiff receives proclamation from Governor Wallace Wilkinson and MG Michael Davidson. Photograph, 133rd Public Affairs Detachment.

Dedication Ceremony, Kentucky’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial. Flyover. Photograph, 133rd Public Affairs Detachment.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Carrollton, Kentucky – A Battery's Vietnam Memorial



Carroll County War Memorial located at the entrance to Butler State Park, Carrollton. Author's collection.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Captured weapons display at the Carrollton National Guard Armory.



SSG Robert J. "Goose" Caldwell shows captured pieces of equipment. These are the same items which are on display at the armory. Kenton County Public Library – Northern Kentucky Photographic Archives.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Bardstown, Kentucky – C Battery Vietnam Memorial



Two memorials grace the lawn surrounding the Nelson County Courthouse, the first honoring all Nelson county casualties from WWI, WWII, Korea and Vietnam; the second honors her casualties of the Vietnam War.



Todd Collins, son of David Collins, who was killed at FSB Tomahawk at the monument dedication ceremony.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Fort Hood, Texas – C Battery Gun from Tomahawk Hill fight

Located behind Snow Hall at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, sets “Charlie 22.” This old veteran of the Vietnam War has stood a lonely vigil since 1973. Over the years both SFC (Ret) Michael Kendrick and the author had seen the gun while training at Fort Sill. It seemed to us that the information on the plaque telling Charlie 22’s story was incorrect and that this gun was actually one of C Battery’s guns from the Tomahawk Hill fight.

In 2002, SFC Kendrick wrote a letter (with documentation) to The Fort Sill National Historic Landmark to verify if “Charlie 22” was improperly indentified. In the response back Ms. Towana Spivey, director of the National Historic Landmark, stated that “Charlie 22” had been in the fight on Tomahawk, and that the information on the plaque would be corrected when the piece was moved to its new location at a artillery display park which was being planned. In recent conversations with Gordon Blaker, the current director of the U.S. Army Artillery Museum at Fort Sill, “Charlie 22” is still in its original location, no change has been made to the descriptive plaque, and no date has been established on its move.



Chapter Six

Meritorious Unit Commendation (MUC)



In July 1969, LTC Glenn D. Spradlin submitted a recommendation for the Meritorious Unit Commendation for the battalion's service in Vietnam. In his letter disapproving the award, MG George L. Mabry, Jr. stated "Although the unit displayed devotion to duty and performed its mission commendably, the stringent requirements for award of the Meritorious Unit Commendation were not fulfilled."

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96375

28 DEC 1969

AVHAG-PD
SUBJECT: Meritorious Unit Commendation

Commanding General
XXIV Corps
ATTN: AVDCAG-PA
APO 96225

The recommendation for award of the Meritorious Unit Commendation to the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery for meritorious achievement during the period 1 November 1968 through 15 July 1969 is not favorably considered. Although the unit displayed devotion to duty and performed its mission commendably, the stringent requirements for award of the Meritorious Unit Commendation were not fulfilled.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

George L. Mabry Jr.
GEORGE L. MABRY, JR.
Major General, US Army
Chief of Staff

AVHAG-ATCG (22 Jul 69) 1st Ind
SUBJECT: Recommendation for Meritorious Unit Commendation

DA, HQ, XXIV Corps Artillery, APO San Francisco 96308 3 August 1969

THRU: Commanding General, XXIV Corps, APO San Francisco 96308

TO: Commanding General, USAHV, ATTN: AVHAG-PO

1. This headquarters has reviewed the recommendation for the Meritorious Unit Commendation for the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery. Unit accomplishments depicted in the basic correspondence are accurate.
2. During this period the XXIV Corps Artillery Firing Battery Inspection Team conducted nine inspections of the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery units. The batteries proved to be excellent, well trained units. Both fire direction and howitzer section personnel were extremely proficient and highly motivated.
3. The results of the Command Maintenance Management Inspections conducted by this headquarters substantiate this unit's operational excellence. The battalion's average score of 92.2% in overall material and 86.4% in maintenance management illustrates the organization's adherence to sound maintenance procedures. The battalion has received the highest scores of the seven battalions inspected.
4. The battalion Metro Section accomplished 98.3% of their required mission during this period. This accomplishment is indicative of a desire to achieve and demonstrate maximum performance at all times.
5. Approval of the award of the Meritorious Unit Commendation is recommended.

JOHN M. JENNINGS
Colonel, FA
Commanding Officer

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 2D BATTALION 138TH ARTILLERY
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96308

22 JUL 1969

AVILA
SUBJECT: Recommendation for Meritorious Unit Commendation

Commanding General
XXIV Corps Artillery
APO 96308

1. Under the provisions of USARV Regulation 672-5, dated 4 October 1968, it is recommended that the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery, XXIV Corps Artillery be awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service in connection with military operations against a hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, from 1 November 1968 through 31 May 1969.
2. The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery, during the cited period, performed the role of General Support, reinforcing the fires of the 101st Airborne Division.
3. The Battalion has been actively engaged in combat, in support of US Army, US Marine, and ARVN Regiments from Fire Support Base Bastogne in the Northwest sector of I Corps Tactical Zone to Hill 98 on the South China Sea.
4. The timely and accurate fire support rendered by the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery, during the cited period, greatly aided the ground gaining forces and played a vital role in defense of Combat Base Eagle, Phu Bai and Gia Le.
5. The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery has continuously demonstrated superior ability and professionalism and has received only the highest praise from supporting commanders. I strongly recommend the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery be awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation.

6 Incl

1. Task Performed
2. Proposed Citation
3. Letter of Commendation
4. Statistical Summary
5. Units
6. Unit Locations

GLENN D. SPRADLIN
LTC, FA
Commanding

TASK: PERFORMED

For exceptionally meritorious achievement in the performance of dedicated service, the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery distinguished itself in support of military operations against a hostile force in the I Corps Tactical Zone, Republic of Vietnam during the period 1 November 1968 through 31 May 1969.

The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery since arrival in Vietnam has performed the mission of General Support, reinforcing the fires of the 101st Airborne Division.

The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery performed every operational task and answered every call for fire despite continuous enemy harassment and almost insurmountable difficulties in supporting and controlling firing elements dispersed over distances of more than 50 miles.

The Artillery motto of "Move, Shoot and Communicate" has never been more dramatically demonstrated than by elements of the Battalion, boldly striking into enemy territory on a moment's notice and delivering deadly accurate and unrelenting fire power. These same elements daringly assaulted the enemy with over-helming and devastating artillery. They leveled his bunkers, destroyed his base camps, obliterated his food supplies and communications, disrupted his operations and dealt him serious and irreplaceable losses.

During the cited period the Battalion has participated in the following major operations: Nevada Eagle, Pistol Boots, Apache Snow, Massachusetts Striker, Tennessee Pride and Kentucky Jumper. The 2d Battalion 138th Artillery has enjoyed spectacular success in providing immediate and extremely effective artillery support to the US Army, US Marines and ARVN Regiments. During this same period the Battalion fired over 19,814 missions and 87,841 rounds. The fact that the firing elements consistently occupied remote and nearly inaccessible areas and yet were supplied fully and effectively is a tribute to the logistical ability of the battalion. The 2/138th Artillery has obtained an unparalleled record in the field of maintenance. During the period specified the unit maintained an operational status on all equipment of 93.6%. The quality of leadership and highly competent organizational maintenance program of this Battalion is strikingly apparent in that support maintenance, on any vehicle, has never been required.

In meeting the call to duty the 2/138th Artillery has evidenced unsurpassed devotion, firm determination, and performed their mission with a spirited, aggressive and exceptionally high degree of operational efficiency and professional pride.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

PROPOSED CITATION
MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 101st Airborne Division Artillery
APO San Francisco 96383

By direction of the Secretary of the Army, under the provisions of paragraph 203, AR 672-5-1, the Meritorious Unit Commendation is awarded to the following named unit of the United States Army for exceptionally meritorious achievement in the performance of outstanding service during periods indicated:

The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery: Comprised of:

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
Battery A
Battery B
Battery C
Service Battery

The citation reads as follows:

The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery distinguished itself in support of military operations in the Republic of Vietnam from 1 November 1968 through 31 May 1969. The members of this unit demonstrated extraordinary diligence, courage and unequalled skill in providing artillery support in the I Corps Tactical Zone.

Immediately upon arrival in-country the Battalion was certified combat ready, and with supreme confidence, remarkable proficiency and imaginative versatility, began support of the 101st Airborne Division in the truest sense of superior artillery.

The unsurpassed technical proficiency and intense professional pride displayed in continually providing timely and precise artillery fires to supported units, joined with the gallantry, determination and esprit de corps demonstrated by the members of the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery under difficult and hazardous conditions, sets it apart from and above other Artillery units.

The performance of the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon the unit, the artillery, and the Armed Forces of the United States.

GLENN D. SPRADLIN
LTC, FA
Commanding

AVDG-DAG

17 July 1969

SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation

THRU: Commanding General
XXIV Corps Artillery
APO San Francisco 96308

TO: Commanding Officer
2d Battalion, 138th Artillery
XXIV Corps Artillery
APO San Francisco 96308

1. I wish to commend the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery for the magnificent fire support rendered the 101st Airborne Division in the Republic of Vietnam during the period 1 November 1968 to 30 June 1969. During this period the battalion fired over 76,000 rounds at over 18,000 different targets in support of the Division ground elements.

2. The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery has conducted numerous battery displacements under the most adverse conditions of weather and terrain in order to bring fire to bear on enemy forces opposing the 101st Airborne Division. In some instances the guns were pushed to forward positions in advance of the light artillery. At times the batteries were called upon to fire in direct support of infantry battalions and were the only artillery capable of performing this mission. In every instance, whether it was to move or shoot, the battalion responded in an exemplary manner and received praise and gratitude from the supported elements.

3. Major operations supported by the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery include Nevada Eagle, Massachusetts Striker, Bristol Boots, Apache Snow and Tennessee Walker. The battalion has occupied fire bases at Phu Bai, Anzio, Birmingham, Bastogne, Quick I, Quick II, Tomahawk, Hill 88, Beach, Hank and Sam.

AVDG-DAG

17 July 1969

SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation

4. The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery has forged an enviable record during the period cited. The willingness and motivation of the officers and men and the professionalism displayed in "getting the job done" has been remarkable and worthy of praise. The support rendered to the troopers of the 101st Airborne Division has been exemplary and has earned the gratitude of all concerned. On behalf of the artillerymen of the 101st Airborne Division I congratulate you on a job well done.

/s/Lloyd J. Picou
/t/LLOYD J. PICOU
Colonel, FA
Commanding

GLENN D. SPRADLIN
LTC, FA
Commanding

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

PART I. Record of absence without leave in relation to unit strength.

MONTH	STRENGTH	CASES	PERCENTAGE
November	526	0	.000
December	525	0	.000
January	522	0	.000
February	521	0	.000
March	519	0	.000
April	533	0	.000
May	542	0	.000

PART II. Record of punishments under Article 15 UCMJ in relation to unit strength.

MONTH	STRENGTH	CASES	PERCENTAGE
November	526	3	.006
December	525	5	.010
January	522	1	.002
February	521	2	.003
March	519	0	.000
April	533	2	.003
May	542	9	.016

PART III. Record of Courts-Martial convictions in relation to unit strength.

MONTH	STRENGTH	CASES	PERCENTAGE
November	526	0	.000
December	525	0	.000
January	522	0	.000
February	521	0	.000
March	519	0	.000
April	533	0	.000
May	542	0	.000

GLENN D. SPRADLIN
LTC, FA
Commanding

UNITS

PART I. Units assigned and recommended for award of the Meritorious Unit Citation. NONE

PART II. Units attached and recommended for award of the Meritorious Unit Citation. NONE

PART III. Units assigned but not recommended for award of the Meritorious Unit Citation. NONE

PART IV. Units attached but not recommended for award of the Meritorious Unit Citation. NONE

GLENN D. SPRADLIN
LTC, FA
Commanding

UNIT LOCATIONS

1. Headquarters and Headquarters Battery:

24 Oct 68 - End of Reporting Period - Gia Le Combat Base (YD 820152)

2. Battery A:

- a. 24 Oct 68 to 7 Mar 69 - Camp Hochmuth (YD 885127)
- b. 7 Mar 69 to 11 Mar 69 - FSB Birmingham (YD 70401012)
- c. 11 Mar 69 to 14 May 69 - FSB Bastogne (YD 62250960)
- d. 14 May 69 to End of Reporting Period - FSB Birmingham (YD 70401012)

3. Battery B:

- a. 24 Oct 68 to 11 Nov 68 - Camp Hochmuth (YD 885127)
- b. 11 Nov 68 to 18 Nov 68 - FSB Anzio (YD 929072)
- c. 18 Nov 68 to 20 Nov 68 - FSB Quick (YD 904029)
- d. 20 Nov 68 to 21 Nov 68 - FSB Anzio (YD 929072)
- e. 21 Nov 68 to 28 Nov 68 - FSB Quick (YD 904029)
- f. 28 Nov 68 to 5 Jan 69 - FSB Anzio (YD 929072)
- g. 5 Jan 69 to 31 Jan 69 - FSB Quick II (YC 894996)
- h. 31 Jan 69 to 29 Mar 69 - FSB Anzio (YD 929072)
- i. 29 Mar 69 to 12 Apr 69 - Camp Hochmuth (YD 885127)
- j. 12 Apr 69 - FSB Quick II (YC 894996)
- k. 12 Apr 69 to End of Reporting Period - Camp Hochmuth (YD 885127)

4. Battery C:

- a. 24 Oct 68 to 27 Nov 68 - Gia Le Combat Base (YD 830150)
- b. 27 Nov 68 to 6 Mar 69 - FSB Hill 88 (AU 807015)
- c. 6 Mar 69 - FSB Tomahawk (2D 11680115)
- d. 6 Mar 69 to 16 Mar 69 - FSB Hill 88 (AU 807015)

- e. 16 Mar 69 - FSB Tomahawk (2D 11680115)
- f. 16 Mar 69 to 10 Apr 69 - FSB Hill 88 (AU 807015)
- g. 10 Apr 69 to 15 Apr 69 - FSB Tomahawk (2D 11680115)
- h. 15 Apr 69 - FSB Bench (AT 871996)
- i. 15 Apr 69 to 25 Apr 69 - FSB Tomahawk (2D 11680115)
- j. 25 Apr 69 to 27 Apr 69 - FSB Quick II (YC 894996)
- k. 27 Apr 69 to 29 Apr 69 - FSB Hank (YD 912337)
- l. 29 Apr 69 to 13 May 69 - FSB Sam (YC 869841)
- m. 13 May 69 to End of Reporting Period - FSB Tomahawk (2D 11680115)

5. Service Battery:

24 Oct 68 to End of Reporting Period - Gia Le Combat Base (YD 820152)

GLENN D. SPRADLIN
LTC, FA
Commanding

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Valorous Unit Award (VUA)



In 1988 a second recommendation was submitted for recognition of the battalion's service in Vietnam. This time the request was for the Valorous Unit Award. Once again the recommendation was disapproved. No further recommendations have been submitted. Below are the documents pertaining to the request.

DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20310-2500

13 APR 1988

NGB-ARP-E (672-5-1)

MEMORANDUM FOR: HQDA(DAPC-ZA), ATTN: DAPC-PDA, ALEX VA 22332-0400

SUBJECT: Unit Award

1. Request your review of the enclosed documents recommending the 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, Kentucky ARNG for the Meritorious Unit Commendation (subsequently disapproved) and any further award action that may have been taken. Specifically, any action that may have been taken on Major General Dawson's recommendation for the Valorous Unit Award (date unknown). MG Dawson was a former Adjutant General, Kentucky.
2. Mr. James N. Halvatgis, Principal Assistant to the Adjutant General, Kentucky, visited me on 12 April 1988. He expressed the keen interest of the Commonwealth's leadership in recognition of the unit on the eve of the 20th anniversary of its 1968 mobilization.
3. I would appreciate your earliest possible reply. My point of contact, SGM McNamara, 697-4922, will help in any way he can.

FOR THE CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU:

Encl *C. E. Rhodes*
C. E. RHODES
Colonel, GS
Chief, Army Personnel Division

CF:
The Adjutant General, Kentucky

DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20310-2500

REPLY TO ATTN OF: July 12, 1988

Enlisted Branch

Mr. James N. Halvatgis
Principal Assistant to the Adjutant General
Commonwealth of Kentucky
Boone National Guard Center
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601-6168

Dear Mr. Halvatgis:

Your request for consideration of the 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery for the Valorous Unit Citation has been disapproved.

The basic correspondence and reply from the U.S. Total Army Personnel Agency are enclosed. Their endorsement fully explains their decision.

Sincerely,
C. E. Rhodes
C. E. Rhodes
Colonel, General Staff
Chief, Army Personnel Division

Enclosure

DAPC-PDA (NOB-ARP-E/13 Apr 88) (672-5-1) 1st End
SUBJECT: Unit Award

DA, USTAPA (Prov), 200 Stovall Street, Alex, VA 22332-0471 27 JUN 1988

FOR: Chief, National Guard Bureau, ATTN: NGB-ARP-E,
Washington, DC 20310-2500

1. The recommendation for an award of the Valorous Unit Award (VUA) for the 2d Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, Kentucky Army National Guard, has been reviewed and cannot be favorably considered for two reasons.
2. First, the time limit for considering unit and individual awards for service in Vietnam expired in 1975. The only exception to this rule is in rare cases where it can be established that a recommendation was submitted in a timely manner and subsequently was not processed to a final decision, either due to loss or inadvertence. This exception does not apply in this case because the original recommendation was disapproved by Headquarters, U.S. Army, Vietnam, in 1969.
3. Secondly, the documents provided in support of the request for the VUA substantiate meritorious performance over a sustained period of time, but do not meet the criteria established for the VUA. The VUA was established by the Department of the Army to be awarded to units of the Armed Forces of the United States for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy of the United States. The degree of heroism required is the same as that which would warrant award of the Silver Star to an individual.
4. Based on the foregoing, there are no substantive bases whereby the 1969 decision to disapprove the recommendation for the Meritorious Unit Commendation may be reconsidered or a new recommendation for the VUA to be processed at this late date.
5. I'm sorry that my reply could not be more encouraging.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

Hector M. Rangel
HECTOR M. RANGEL
Lieutenant Colonel, GS
Chief, Military Awards Branch

wd encls

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

SUBJECT: Unit Award

The Adjutant General
Department of the Army
ATTN: Awards Branch
Washington, D.C. 20315

1. Reference letter, Headquarters, 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery, subject: Recommendation for Meritorious Unit Commendation, dated 22 July 1969, with inclosures, attached as inclosure 1.
2. The 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery was mobilized on 13 May 1968 and served on active duty until 20 October 1969, at which time it reverted to National Guard status. The battalion served in the Republic of Vietnam from October 1968 until October 1969. During its tour in Vietnam the battalion distinguished itself by its efficiency and professionalism, and was highly praised for its performance. Your attention is invited to inclosure 2 to this letter.
3. The battalion was recommended for award of the Meritorious Unit Citation (MUC) in July 1969 covering service in the Republic of Vietnam while assigned to XXIV Corps Artillery, beginning in October 1968. In January 1970, subsequent to release of the battalion from active duty, word was received that the award had been denied. It is understood that US Army Republic of Vietnam did not approve the award because of guidance received from Department of the Army pending revision of AR 672-5-1. Specifically, it was reported that the policy change restricts award of the MUC to combat service

SUBJECT: Unit Award

support units only. A TWX was later received verifying the report and stated that this was the reason for disapproval. A copy of the TWX is attached as inclosure 2.

4. Although the award of the MUC could not be made because of the policy change, it is felt that some form of equitable recognition is justified in view of the battalion accomplishments in the Republic of Vietnam. The accomplishments which were reflected in the documentation included with the initial recommendation are attested to in part by the letter with indorsements attached as inclosure 3. In the event further data are desired regarding the demonstrated performance of the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery, in the Republic of Vietnam, Lieutenant General Richard Stilwell, Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, commanded XXIV Corps during the period cited and has personal knowledge of the activities and service rendered by the battalion.
5. Based on the above, it is recommended that the 2d Battalion, 138th Artillery be considered for the Valorous Unit Award.

3 Incls
1. Ltr, 2/138 Arty
5-2. Ltr, CG, 101st Abn Div
(AM) w/2 Ind
2-3. TWX, CGARADCOM

LARRY C. DAMSON
Major General, Ky HG
The Adjutant General

Chapter Seven Reunions

Over the years, various reunions for the members of the battalion have been held. Most of the batteries conduct their own annual private “get-together.” Below are a few examples of some of these reunions.

Soon after their return from Vietnam, the officers of the Second Battalion attended a get together to pay tribute to Lieutenant Colonel Glenn D. Spradlin, the Active Duty Officer who commanded the battalion during the last six months of service in Vietnam. LTC Spradlin came from 5th Army Headquarters at Fort Sam Houston, Texas to visit with the Kentuckians and to renew friendships that grew from his assignment with the Kentucky Army National Guard.



LTC Spradlin and LTC Cundiff, both men commanded the Battalion in Vietnam. Known 2nd Battalion officers at the event were Julius L. Berthold, Howard Boatman, Charles, H. Bush, Charles K. Butler, David L. Clark, Earl L. Doyle Jr., Arthur T. Eatmon, Rural Goodman, Richard L. Hanna, Garland Henderson, Thomas R. Ice, Harold O. Loy, Samuel T. McClure, James W. O’Keefe, Charles W. Richie, Larry Wadley, Donald Wallace, Gerald J. Wilhoite, Bingham H. Willson, Roye S. Wilson, and Walter R. Wood.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

1980 – Battalion reunion held at the Louisville Fairgrounds Armory.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

1988 – 20th Anniversary Reunion held at Boone National Guard Center in conjunction with the dedication of the Kentucky Vietnam Veteran Memorial



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

1989 – Reunion of C Battery at the KyVVM



Major General Michael Davidson and Colonel Thomas McClure address the crowd.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Members of Charlie Battery Return to FSB Tomahawk.

In October 1995, seven members of C Battery returned to Vietnam. A camera crew from WHAS-11 went with them to document their journey and return to FSB Tomahawk.



KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM



Chapter Eight

Future Leadership in the Kentucky National Guard

Many members of the 2nd Battalion continued their careers with the Kentucky National Guard some attaining senior positions in the organization. Below are listed officers of the battalion who attained General Officer rank and enlisted personnel who eventually became Sergeant Majors:

General Officers

Brigadier General Robert W. Cundiff
Brigadier General Robert D. James
Brigadier General Thomas R. Ice
Brigadier General Julius L. Berthold
Brigadier General Earl L. Doyle Jr.

Sergeant Majors

State Command Sergeant Major Robert Bailey
State Command Sergeant Major Edgar L. Satchwell
Sergeant Major Robert J. "Goose" Caldwell
Command Sergeant Major Robert E. Dermon
Command Sergeant Major James L. Supplee

Chapter Nine

Belated Purple Heart Medals

Joseph E. Keeling, Jr.



Article appeared on page 3 of the January 1989 edition of the Bluegrass Guard Magazine.



COL James Daniel, left, Assistant Division Commander of the 35th ID (M), presents Joseph E. Keeling, Jr., former member of Battery C, with a Purple Heart for wounds received during the Vietnam War.

Vietnam Vet Receives Belated Purple Heart in Bardstown

By SGT Robert Pillow
133rd PAD

BARDSTOWN -- When Joseph E. Keeling, Jr. went to a Christmas dinner with his son last month, he got more than just a meal.

Keeling, formerly of Bardstown's Battery C, 2/138th Field Artillery, was decorated with a Purple Heart for wounds sustained during the Vietnam War.

Battery C was activated and sent to Vietnam during the latter part of the war. On June 19, 1969, the unit was attacked at Fire Base Tomahawk, between Danang and Hue.

"They breached our perimeter and from there several NVAs moved to our bunkers and threw satchel charges," Keeling said of the attack. "They threw one into our bunker and it fell behind us and went off."

Few survived the attack and Keeling, then a 25-year-old Specialist Four, received a Bronze Star with an oak leaf cluster for his part in defending the fire base. Though wounded in the attack, he did not receive a Purple Heart.

And he probably would not have received it if his son, SGT Joseph S. Keeling of the 223rd Military Police in Louisville, had not taken such an interest in the battle that wounded his father.

Nearly two years ago, SGT Keeling asked the 223rd's recruiter, SFC Ron Harris for his help in getting the decoration to his father. The military police officer never mentioned to his father what he was doing, right up to the day the award was presented, December 4, 1988, at the Bardstown Armory.

"I just told him there was going to be a get-together here and I wanted him to come," the sergeant said. "He said he would if he had time."

So the son, who had written the Army about the decoration, made sure his father would attend without knowing why he needed to be there. Had it been necessary, the son said, church would have been dismissed early to get his father to the armory on time.

COL James Daniel, Assistant Division Commander of the 35th ID (M), pinned the decoration on Keeling's coat and commended the former Guardsman for his service.

After the ceremony, Keeling said he was surprised to get the decoration after nearly 20 years and talked about how his son became interested in the medal.

"My son saw my orders and a copy of the citation for the Bronze Star," Keeling Jr. said. "He asked why I didn't get a Purple Heart. I told him 'it's not important; it doesn't matter.'"

The former Guardsman said he played down the significance of being wounded because his wounds were superficial.

"I was only out of action for four days," he said. "You got to remember that some of our guys didn't make it."

"Some were more seriously wounded and they are the ones who should have this," Keeling Jr. said as he pointed to his Purple Heart.

Ronnie Hibbs



Article from the Kentucky Standard, Bardstown, Kentucky, 30 March 2010.

Hibbs gets Purple Heart 41 years after Vietnam battle

By STEPHANIE HORNBACK

Ronnie Hibbs' transfer to a hospital in Japan after he was injured in the Vietnam War came amidst a lot of confusion. Some of the leaders in his National Guard unit were home on emergency leave or had been injured themselves, so his paperwork might not have been completed properly. Plus, the unit had just come under an unexpected and intense attack, which brought with it a chaos that took a while to settle.

As a result, Hibbs never received a Purple Heart for his injuries on June 19, 1969, when Bardstown's "Charlie" Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery was attacked on Fire Support Base Tomahawk. Until Saturday, that is.

At a dinner at Maywood Country Club in his honor, Hibbs accepted a Purple Heart from Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Thomas R. Ice, who was his executive officer when the unit was activated for Vietnam.

Ice didn't know until three years ago that Hibbs, High Grove, never received an official commendation for his service in Vietnam. Ice took up the cause on the conditions that he would be the one to present the medal to Hibbs and that others would be invited. Hibbs reluctantly agreed.

"According to Raymond (Ice), it's really a pretty big deal," Hibbs said. As guests greeted and congratulated him, he said, "A few more showed up than I was expecting."

Hibbs was quick to give credit to those who saved his life in Vietnam" Jerry Janes and Bobby Stumph. Janes shoved him out of the howitzer when enemy fire started coming in, and Stumph left the safety of a bunker, with bullets flying all around, when he realized Hibbs was on fire. Stumph threw a blanket on him and put out the flames, Hibbs' wife, Libby Hibbs, said.

Ronnie Hibbs was on fire because the enemy threw a satchel charge, a small bag of dynamite, which exploded under his feet. His clothing caught fire and burned his neck and back.

He described his injury as "not bad," especially considering the fate others met in his unit. Five soldiers from the unit, including three from Nelson County" David Collins, Jim Moore and Ronnie Simpson" died that day, and many more were injured.

Libby Hibbs recalled Saturday when she and other wives of the National Guard soldiers learned about the attack. They gathered together and waited for news.

"I just thank God that all the ones that are here came back and I pray for the ones that didn't," she said.

No one could find her husband after the attack until his uncle, A.V. Hibbs, called the Red Cross and learned he was in a Japanese hospital.

Libby Hibbs said Ronnie didn't want a production about the Purple Heart, because he isn't the only man from the unit who got one. Plus, he's humble, she said.

"My husband doesn't say much."

He did say, however, that he appreciated Ice's work in getting the medal. Don Parrish, who was also on Tomahawk Hill during the attack, helped as well.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Ronnie Hibbs was also touched that so many of his friends and fellow soldiers showed up to help him celebrate. He said he went to Old Kentucky Home High School with many of them, then to Vietnam, and they have stayed in touch through the years. That says a lot, he said.

Chapter Ten

The General's "Red Chair"



The General's "Red Chair" has been reupholstered and still survives in the home of Mrs. Cundiff.

The history of Second Battalion in Vietnam would not be complete without telling the story of General Cundiff's "Red Chair." A few years ago during a birthday party held in his honor, the story of the "Red Chair" was told, in the words of the chair, himself!

The chair was originally located in the Officer's Club at Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky. During Annual Training at the post in 1957, a couple young officers in the battalion felt their commander needed a comfortable chair in his office. Late one evening these young gentlemen "borrowed" the chair from the club. Over the next few years the chair made its way back to Camp Breckinridge during the Battalion's annual training period, however it never made it back to the Officer's Club. In 1963, it was taken to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for summer camp. In 1964, it spent summer camp at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. During the years 1965 through 1967, summer camp was spent at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The following which covers the Vietnam War are in the words of the chair:

"1968 brought a real change of pace and with it a call to active duty, and this time on the road to Fort Hood, Texas. There we conquered Brigadier General John K. Boles, and showed all the other field artillery battalions how it should be done. The fall of that year found us really on the road, this time to Southeast Asia and Vietnam.

There were good times and there were bad times and there were sad times. But for those of us who served with you General Cundiff and for those who followed our performance of duty, all can say a job well done. And, one of the good times was a visit by Adjutant General Larry Dawson, thanks General

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Dawson. The trip home for me was not a very scenic trip, you see I traveled in one of those conex containers, boy was it dark in there. I guess war is still hell.”

After Vietnam, the chair tells of his remaining years on duty with General Cundiff and the Guard, serving in Louisville, Bowling Green and Frankfort. When the General retired, the chair went with him to his home, where he currently resides.

Appendix – A
Lineage and Honors
2ND BATTALION, 138TH FIELD ARTILLERY



Second Battalion's Colors carried in Vietnam. Currently framed and on display at Battalion Headquarters located in the John R. Groves National Guard Armory in Lexington, Kentucky.

The 2/138th Field Artillery Battalion was constituted 21 January, 1839 in the Kentucky Militia as the Louisville Legion and organized at Louisville, Kentucky.

Mustered into Federal service 17 May, 1846 as the 1st Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment; mustered out of Federal Service 17 May, 1847 at New Orleans, Louisiana.

Reorganized 30 June, 1851 in the Kentucky Volunteer Militia at Louisville, Kentucky as the Louisville Legion.

Reorganized 7 May, 1860 in the Kentucky State Guard as the 1st Infantry Regiment (Louisville Legion) to consist of the Louisville Battalion and Marion Rifle Battalion.

1st Infantry Regiment reorganized in July 1861, at Camp Joe Holt, Indiana, with men of Union sympathy, as the 3rd Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment (Louisville Legion).

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Mustered into Federal service 9 September, 1861 as the 5th Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment (Louisville Legion); mustered out of Federal service in September, 1864 at Louisville, Kentucky.

Reorganized 15 October, 1878 in the Kentucky State Guard at Louisville, Kentucky as the 1st Battalion (Louisville Legion).

Expanded, reorganized, and redesignated in 1883 as the 1st Kentucky Volunteer Infantry (Louisville Legion).

Mustered into Federal service 1 - 10 June, 1898 at Lexington, Kentucky as the 1st Kentucky Volunteer Infantry; mustered out of Federal service 24 February, 1899 at Louisville, Kentucky.

Reorganized 31 July, 1899 in the Kentucky State Guard at Louisville, Kentucky as the 1st Regiment of Infantry (Louisville Legion).

Mustered out of state service 27 November, 1900 at Louisville, Kentucky.

Reorganized 27 May, 1904 in the Kentucky State Guard at Louisville, Kentucky as the 1st Regiment of Infantry (Louisville Legion).

(Kentucky State Guard redesignated 19 March, 1912 as the Kentucky National Guard).

Called into Federal service 18 June 1916 for service on the Mexican border. Mustered into Federal service 25 June, 1916 at Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

(Company A mustered out of Federal service in February, 1917 at Fort Thomas, Kentucky; called into Federal service 12 April 1917; mustered into Federal service 8 May, 1917 at Camp Stanley, Kentucky).

Drafted into Federal service 5 August, 1917.

Converted and redesignated 9 October, 1917 as the 138th Field Artillery and assigned to 38th Division.

Demobilized 8 January, 1919 at Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky.

Reorganized 1921-1922 in the Kentucky National Guard at Louisville, Kentucky as the 138th Field Artillery and assigned to the 38th Division; Headquarters Federally recognized 30 June, 1922 at Louisville, Kentucky.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Inducted into Federal service 17 January, 1941 at Louisville, Kentucky.

(Antiaircraft and Antitank Platoons of Headquarters Batteries, 1st and 2nd Battalions, consolidated, converted and redesignated 15 December, 1941 as Company A, 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and relieved from assignment to the 38th Division [see below]).

Relieved 1 March 1942 from assignment to the 38th Division: regiment concurrently broken up and its elements reorganized and redesignated as follows:

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery disbanded.

1st Battalion as the 138th Field Artillery Battalion, an element of the 38th Infantry Division.

2nd Battalion as the 198th Field Artillery Battalion and relieved from assignment to 38th Infantry Division.

After 1 March, 1942 the above units underwent changes as follows:

138th Field Artillery Battalion inactivated 1 November, 1945 at Camp Anza, California.

Relieved 13 May, 1946 from assignment to the 38th Infantry Division. Reorganized and Federally recognized 24 September, 1946 at Louisville, Kentucky.

198th Field Artillery Battalion inactivated 21 January, 1946 at Camp Anza, California.

Reorganized and Federally recognized 4 November, 1947 at Louisville, Kentucky.

Ordered into active Federal service 1 May, 1951 at Louisville, Kentucky.

(198th Field Artillery Battalion [NGUS] organized and Federally recognized 1 May, 1953 with Headquarters at Louisville, Kentucky).

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Released 2 December, 1954 from active Federal service and reverted to state control; Federal recognition concurrently withdrawn from the 198th Field Artillery Battalion [NGUS].

Company A, 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion, inactivated 7 November, 1945 at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Expanded, converted and redesignated 5 August, 1946 as the 452nd Field Artillery Battalion.

Reorganized and Federally recognized 4 November, 1947 at Louisville, Kentucky.

Reorganized and redesignated 1 September, 1949 as the 452nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

Ordered into active Federal service 11 September, 1950 at Louisville, Kentucky. (452nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion [NGUS] organized and Federally recognized 21 September, 1952 with Headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky).

Released 17 January, 1955 from active Federal service and reverted to state control; Federal recognition concurrently withdrawn from the 452nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion [NGUS].

138th and 198th Field Artillery Battalions and the 452nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion consolidated 1 October, 1959 with Headquarters, 138th Field Artillery (reconstituted 25 August, 1945 in the Kentucky National Guard), 441st and 623rd Field Artillery Battalions, and the 640th Field Artillery Battalion (organized and Federally recognized 1 May, 1955 with Headquarters at Lexington, Kentucky) and consolidated unit reorganized and redesignated as the 138th Artillery, a parent regiment under the Combat Arms Regiment System, to consist of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Howitzer Battalions, 5th Observation Battalion, and Battery A.

Reorganized 1 September, 1961 to consist of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Howitzer Battalions, 5th Target Acquisition Battalion, and Battery A.

Reorganized 1 December, 1965 to consist of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Howitzer Battalions, 5th Battalion, and Battery A.

Reorganized 1 March, 1966 to consist of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Howitzer Battalions, 5th Battalion, and Batteries A and F.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Reorganized 1 February, 1968 to consist of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Howitzer Battalions, 5th Battalion, and Batteries A and F.

Reorganized 1 March, 1968 to consist of the 1st and 2nd Howitzer Battalions, 4th and 5th Battalions, and Batteries A and F.

Reorganized 1 May, 1968 to consist of the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Battalions and Battery A.

(2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery ordered into active Federal service 13 May, 1968 at home stations).

Reorganized 1 May, 1969 to consist of the 2nd and 5th Battalions and Battery A.

(2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery released 24 October, 1969 from active Federal service and reverted to state control).

Redesignated 1 March, 1972 as the 138th Field Artillery.

Reorganized 1 May, 1974 to consist of the 2nd Battalion.

Reorganized 1 November, 1980 to consist of the 2nd Battalion, an element of the 149th Separate Armored Brigade.

Reorganized 1 November, 1985 to consist of the 2nd Battalion, an element of the 35th Infantry Division.

Withdrawn 1 June, 1989 from Combat Arms Regimental System and reorganized under the United States Army Regimental System.

ANNEX 1

Constituted 22 May 1846 in the Kentucky Militia as the 1st Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry and the 2nd Kentucky Volunteer Infantry.

Organized from volunteers of the enrolled militia, principally from counties in central Kentucky, and mustered into Federal service 9 June 1846 at Louisville; mustered out of Federal service 7 and 9 June 1847, respectively, at New Orleans, Louisiana, and continued in state service as separate volunteer militia companies.

Reorganized 15 June 1860 in the Kentucky State Guard as the Lexington Battalion, to include the Lexington Rifles (organized in 1857 by Captain John Hunt Morgan).

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Expanded 6 November 1860 to form the Lexington Battalion (to include the Lexington Rifles) and the Kentucky River Battalion.

Lexington and Kentucky River Battalions broken up in 1861 and elements reorganized as follows:

Elements with Union sympathy reorganized April-June 1861 primarily as the 1st and 2nd Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiments; mustered into Federal service 4 and 13 June 1861, respectively, at Camp Clay, Ohio; mustered out of Federal service 18 and 19 June 1864, respectively, at Covington.

Elements with Confederate sympathy (less Lexington Rifles) reorganized in July 1861 as elements of the 1st Kentucky Brigade (The Orphan Brigade); mustered into Confederate service in July 1861 at Camp Boone, Tennessee; surrendered 4 May 1865 at Washington, Georgia.

Lexington Rifles withdrawn 20 September 1861 from the Kentucky State Guard, reorganized as a separate company of cavalry, and mustered into Confederate service at Bowling Green; consolidated in October 1861 with two other cavalry companies and consolidated unit reorganized and redesignated as Morgan's Squadron, Kentucky Cavalry; expanded, reorganized, and redesignated in June 1862 as the 2nd Kentucky Cavalry Regiment (Morgan's Men); surrendered 8 May 1865 near Woodstock, Georgia.

Reorganized 18 May 1881 in the Kentucky State Guard as the 3rd Battalion, with Headquarters at Lexington.

Expanded, reorganized, and redesignated in 1883 as the 2nd Regiment of Infantry, with Headquarters at Lexington.

Mustered into Federal service 14-25 May 1898 at Lexington as the 2nd Kentucky Volunteer Infantry; mustered out of Federal service 31 October 1898 at Lexington.

Reorganized 24 April 1899 in the Kentucky State Guard as the 1st Regiment of Infantry, with Headquarters at Lexington.

Redesignated 31 July 1899 as the 2nd Regiment of Infantry.

(Kentucky State Guard redesignated 19 March 1912 as the Kentucky National Guard).

Called into Federal service 18 June 1916 for service on the Mexican border.

Mustered into Federal service 25 June 1916 at Fort Thomas, Kentucky; mustered out of Federal service 15 February 1917 at Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Called into Federal service 12 April 1917; mustered into Federal service 21 April 1917 at Camp Stanley, Kentucky.

Drafted into Federal service 5 August 1917.

Consolidated 1 October 1917 with the 3rd Regiment of Infantry (less 3rd Battalion) (see ANNEX 2); consolidated unit concurrently reorganized and redesignated as the 149th Infantry and assigned to the 38th Division.

Demobilized in January 1919 at Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky.

Former 2nd and 3rd Regiments of Infantry reorganized 1920-1921 in the Kentucky National Guard as the 1st Infantry and the 53rd and 54th Machine Gun Squadrons (1st Infantry – hereafter separate lineage).

53rd and 54th Machine Gun Squadrons consolidated 1 April 1929; consolidated unit concurrently reorganized and redesignated as the 123rd Cavalry, with Headquarters Federally recognized at Louisville, and assigned to the 22nd Cavalry Division.

Relieved 1 November 1940 from assignment to the 22nd Cavalry Division; regiment concurrently broken up and its elements converted and redesignated as follows:

Regiment (less 1st and 2nd Squadrons) as the 106th Separate Battalion, Coast Artillery, with Headquarters at Frankfort.

1st and 2nd Squadrons as the 103rd Separate Battalion, Coast Artillery, with Headquarters at Louisville.

After 1 November 1940 the above units underwent changes as follows:

106th Separate Battalion, Coast Artillery, inducted into Federate service 6 January 1941 at home stations.

Reorganized and redesignated 14 July 1944 as the 106th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion.

Inactivated 3 December 1945 at Camp Shanks, New York.

Redesignated 29 January 1947 as the 623rd Field Artillery Battalion; concurrently reorganized and Federally recognized in south-central Kentucky with Headquarters at Glasgow.

Ordered into active Federal service 23 January 1951 at home stations.

Reorganized and redesignated 5 March 1951 as the 623rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Reorganized and redesignated 10 September 1951 as the 623rd Field Artillery Battalion.

(623rd Field Artillery Battalion [NGUS] organized and Federally recognized 23 January 1953 with Headquarters at Glasgow).

Released 18 March 1955 from active Federal service and reverted to state control; Federal recognition concurrently withdrawn from the 623rd Field Artillery Battalion (NGUS).

103rd Separate Battalion, Coast Artillery, inducted into Federal service 24 February 1941 at home stations.

Reorganized and redesignated 13 November 1943 as the 103rd Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion.

Inactivated 1 December 1945 at Camp Shanks, New York.

Redesignated 13 May 1946 as the 441st Field Artillery Battalion.

Reorganized and Federally recognized 30 January 1947 in central Kentucky with Headquarters at Lexington.

(Location of Headquarters changed 22 November 1953 to Richmond).

ANNEX 2

Organized 8 May 1882 in the Kentucky State Guard in western Kentucky as the 4th Battalion, with Headquarters at Bowling Green.

Expanded, reorganized, and redesignated in 1883 as the 3rd Regiment of Infantry, with Headquarters at Bowling Green.

Mustered into Federal service 21-31 May 1898 at Lexington as the 3rd Kentucky Volunteer Infantry; mustered out of Federal service 16 May 1899 at Savannah, Georgia.

Reorganized 10 October 1899 in the Kentucky State Guard as the 3rd Regiment of Infantry, with Headquarters at Bowling Green.

(Kentucky State Guard redesignated 19 March 1912 as the Kentucky National Guard).

Called into Federal service 18 June 1916 for service on the Mexican border.

Mustered into Federal service 12 April 1917; mustered into Federal service 21 April 1917 at Camp Stanley, Kentucky.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Drafted into Federal service 5 August 1917.

3rd Regiment of Infantry (less 3rd Battalion) consolidated 1 October 1917 with the 2nd Regiment of Infantry (see ANNEX 1); consolidated unit concurrently reorganized and redesignated as the 149th Infantry and assigned to the 38th Division; 3rd Battalion, 3rd Regiment of Infantry, concurrently reorganized and redesignated as Companies A and B, 138th Machine Gun Battalion; Company F, 113th Ammunition Train; and Company B, 113th Engineers, elements of the 38th Division.

Above units demobilized in January 1919 at Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky.

CURRENT/RECENT OPERATIONS OF 2/138TH FIRES BATTALION

During Operation Desert Storm, the battalion sent 58 soldiers with our sister battalion, 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery, and as volunteers with other units.

In October 2006, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, and A Battery, deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and conducted full-spectrum Military Police support operations and developed partnerships with the Afghan National Police in conjunction with combat operations in sector while C and Service Battery deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) providing Base Defense and performed force protection missions, guarded military installations, ran security checkpoints, and supported personal security details for coalition forces.

In June 2007 B Battery, deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) performing convoy security and successfully executing 140 missions (driving almost 300,000 miles). During this time the unit was tasked with several high profile security missions and proved to be a key component of sustainment operations within the Multi-National Corps – Iraq (MNC-I).

The regiment stands today as the most decorated unit in the Kentucky Army National Guard, with 52 campaign streamers, the Navy Unit Commendation, Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, and the Meritorious Unit Commendation. The regiment’s motto is “Arma Parato Fero” that in English translates “We bear arms in readiness”. The battalion’s Headquarters is in Lexington, with subordinate units in Carrollton, Carlisle, Bardstown, and Louisville.” We serve as proud Kentuckians.

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT

Mexican War

Monterey

Buena Vista

Civil War (Union service)

Shiloh

Murfreesborough

Chickamauga

Kentucky 1862

Atlanta

Kentucky 1864

West Virginia 1861

Tennessee 1863

Mississippi 1862

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Civil War (Confederate service)

Henry and Donelson	Louisiana 1862
Shiloh	Mississippi 1862
Murfreesborough	Tennessee 1862
Chickamagua	Tennessee 1863
Atlanta	Indiana 1863
Kentucky 1862	South Carolina 1865
Kentucky 1864	

War with Spain

Puerto Rico

World War I

Streamer without inscription

World War II

New Guinea	Anzio (with arrowhead)
Leyte (with arrowhead)	Rome-Arno
Luzon	Normandy
Ryukyus	Northern France
Algeria-French Morocco (with arrowhead)	Southern France (with arrowhead)
Tunisia	Rhineland
Sicily (with arrowhead)	Ardennes-Alsace
Naples-Foggia (with arrowhead)	Central Europe

Battery C (Bardstown), 2nd Battalion, additionally entitled to:

World War II – AP

Bismark Archipelago

Korean War

Second Korean Winter	Third Korean Winter
Korean Summer/Fall 1952	Korean Summer 1953

Vietnam

Counteroffensive, Phase IV	Tet 69/Counteroffensive
Counteroffensive, Phase V	Summer-Fall 1969
Counteroffensive, Phase VI	

DECORATIONS

Navy Unit Commendation, streamer embroidered PANMUNJOM

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, streamer embroidered 17 OCTOBER 1944 TO 4 JULY 1945

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

Battery C (Bardstown), 2nd Battalion, additionally entitled to:

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army), streamer embroidered PACIFIC THEATER

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Operation Iraqi Freedom.



DISTINCTIVE UNIT INSIGNIA. Description: A gold color metal and enamel device 1 1/8 inches (2.86cm) in height overall consisting of a shield blazoned: Or, a Kentucky Cardinal (*cardinalis cardinalis*) Proper perched on a twig Vert; on a chief Azure four mullets of the field. Attached below the shield a gold triparted scroll inscribed "ARMA PARATO FERRO" in black letters. Symbolism: The four mullets represent the four wars, Mexican, Civil, Spanish and World War I, in which the regiment participated; the chief Azure is symbolic of its history

as an Infantry organization, and the Kentucky Cardinal is emblematic of the State of Kentucky and of the regiment's history as an Artillery unit. Background: The distinctive unit insignia was originally approved for the 138th Field Artillery Regiment on 4 Aug 1934; redesignated for the 138th Field Artillery Battalion on 29 Dec 1942; redesignated for the 138th Artillery on 4 Oct 1960; redesignated for the 138th Field Artillery on 9 Aug 1970, and amended on 2 Nov 1999 to add a symbolism.

XXIV CORPS



XXIV Corps (24th Corps) was a U.S. Army Corps-level command during World War II and the Vietnam War.

XXIV Corps was activated at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, on April 8, 1944. It participated in the invasion of Leyte in the Philippine Islands on October 20, 1944, with the 7th Infantry Division and 96th Infantry Division its major combat units. During the campaign on Leyte, the 77th Infantry Division came under control of XXIV Corps.

From April 1 to June 30, 1945, XXIV Corps and its divisions participated in the invasion of Okinawa. In September 1945, after the surrender of Japan, XXIV Corps moved to Korea, where it remained on occupation duty until its deactivation on January 25, 1949.

XXIV Corps was re-activated on August 15, 1968, at Fort Hood, Texas, to replace the "Provisional Corps Vietnam," a temporary headquarters created March 10, 1968 during the Tet Offensive. Upon its arrival in Vietnam, XXIV Corps was placed under the operational control of the III Marine Expeditionary Force to control the activities of U.S. Army ground combat units deployed in northern South Vietnam and had its headquarters at Phu Bai until March 9, 1970, when it relocated to Da Nang. At that time it assumed control of all U.S. ground forces in I CTZ, with all remaining Marine units coming under its operational control until their withdrawal. During its service in Vietnam XXIV Corps was a component command of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV).

XXIV Corps area of responsibility was I Corps Tactical Zone ("Eye Corps"), later renamed Military Region 1, which comprised the five northernmost provinces of the South Vietnam. Among the divisions and brigades it controlled were:

1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 23rd Infantry Division (Americal), 101st Airborne Division, 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division, 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, 173rd Airborne Brigade, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, 108th Artillery Group, III Marine Expeditionary Force, 3rd Marine Amphibious Brigade, Task Force Clearwater (U.S. Navy).

XXIV Corps was deactivated on June 30, 1972 in the final stages the withdrawal of U.S. ground combat forces from Vietnam, and its assets formed the basis for its successor, the First Regional Assistance Command (FRAC).

SHOULDER SLEEVE INSIGNIA. Description: On a shield 2 7/8 inches (7.30cm) in height and 2 1/2 inches (6.35cm) in width a white heart, a blue heart and a white heart superimposed one upon the other. Symbolism: The design is an arbitrary design and is in the colors of the Corps. Background: The shoulder sleeve insignia was authorized on 15 Aug 1944. (TIOH Dwg. No. A-1-389)

DISTINCTIVE UNIT INSIGNIA. Description: A gold color metal and enamel device 1 3/16 inches (3.02cm) in height overall consisting of a gold disc within an annulet divided horizontally the upper half of white enamel and the lower half of blue enamel and bearing a blue enamel heart (of the same shape as that on the authorized shoulder sleeve insignia of the XXIV Corps). The "Auricles" and the tip touching the inner periphery of the annulet surmounted saltirewise by an unsheathed Crusader's sword point up, blade of white enamel and hilt gold, and a red enamel stylized arrow, point up, within the blue heart, above a concentric gold scroll lined with red enamel and bearing the inscription "Honed in Combat" in red enamel letters.

Symbolism: The design is based on the authorized shoulder sleeve insignia of the XXIV Corps. The gold disc, symbolic of the sun, alludes to the Pacific Islands and areas with which the XXIV Corps is associated. The encircling white and blue annulet refers to the white beaches and the blue water of the Pacific: Hawaii (the annulet also simulating the letter "O" for Oahu where the Corps was initially activated 8 Apr 1944) and the Philippines and Ryukyus campaigns in which the Corps participated during World War II. The red arrow refers to the assault landing at Leyte and the blue, white and red colors of the insignia refer to the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation awarded the Corps for the period of 17 Oct 1944 to 4 Jul 1945. The Crusader's sword is for service in Vietnam where the Corps was activated 15 Aug 1968 as the successor to the Provisional Corps, Vietnam. In allusion to the motto "Honed in Combat" the red stylized arrow may be likened to the "whetstone of combat" on which the sword has been and is being honed. The heart and the colors blue and white were suggested by the authorized shoulder sleeve insignia of the XXIV and in this instance the heart has been made blue, a color symbolic of loyalty and freedom, and attests to the "true blue" attributes of the Corps. The horizontal division of the annulet into white and blue was suggested by the flag base of all distinguishing flags authorized for Corps. Background: The distinctive unit insignia was authorized on 6 Feb 1969.

Appendix – B

Campaign Streamers

Vietnam Service Streamer. There were 17 campaigns for Vietnam service during the period 1962 - 1973. The Vietnam Service streamer is yellow with three red stripes through the center. It has a green stripe on each side. The yellow with red stripes was suggested by the flag of the Republic of Vietnam. The green alludes to the jungle. The following inscriptions in white are authorized to 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery:



VIETNAM COUNTEROFFENSIVE, PHASE IV 1968

Counteroffensive, Phase IV, 2 April 1968 – 30 June 1968. During this period friendly forces conducted a number of battalion-size attritional operations against the enemy.

Operations PEGASUS-Lam Son 207 relieved the Khe Sanh Combat Base on 5 April and thereby opened Route 9 for the first time since August 1967. This operation not only severely restricted the North Vietnamese Army's use of western Quang Tri Province but also inflicted casualties on the remnants of two North Vietnamese divisions withdrawing from the area. This success was followed by a singular allied spoiling operation in the A Chau Valley, Operation DELAWARE-Lam Son. These two operations prevented the enemy from further attacking I Corps Tactical Zone population centers and forced him to shift his pressure to the III Corps Tactical Zone.

During the period 5-12 May 1968 the Viet Cong launched an offensive with Saigon as the primary objective. Friendly forces defended the city with great determination. Consequently Saigon was never in danger of being overrun. Small Viet Cong units that did manage to get into the outskirts were fragmented and driven out with great loss of enemy life. By the end of June 1968 friendly forces had decisively blunted the enemy's attacks, inflicted very heavy casualties, and hindered his ability to attack urban areas throughout the Republic of Vietnam. The enemy was forced to withdraw to his sanctuaries.

The strength of the U.S. Army in Vietnam reach a peak of nearly 360,000 men during this period.



VIETNAM COUNTEROFFENSIVE, PHASE V 1968.

Counteroffensive, Phase V, 1 July 1968 – 1 November 1968. During this period a country-wide effort was begun to restore government control of territory lost to the enemy since the Tet offensive. The enemy attempted another such offensive on 17-18 August but his efforts were comparatively feeble and were quickly overwhelmed by Allied forces.

In the fall of 1968 the South Vietnamese government, with major U.S. support, launched an accelerated pacification campaign. All friendly forces were coordinated and brought to bear on the enemy in every tactical area of operation. In these intensified operations, friendly units first secured a target area, then Vietnamese government units, regional forces/popular forces, police and civil authorities screened the inhabitants, seeking members of the Viet Cong infrastructure. This technique was so successful against the political apparatus that it became the basis for subsequent friendly operations. Government influence expanded into areas of the countryside previously dominated by the Viet Cong to such an extent that two years later at least some measure of government control was evident in all but a few remote regions.

VIETNAM COUNTEROFFENSIVE, PHASE VI, 1968-1969

VIETNAM COUNTEROFFENSIVE, PHASE VI, 1968-1969

Counteroffensive, Phase VI, 2 November 1968 - 22 February 1969. In November 1968 the South Vietnam government with American support began a concentrated effort to expand security in the countryside. This project was known as the "Accelerated Pacification Campaign."

This period covers the election of President Richard M. Nixon and a change of policy brought about by his administration after January 1969 when he announced a coming end to US combat in Southeast Asia and a simultaneous strengthening of South Vietnam's ability to defend itself. Formal truce negotiations began in Paris on January 25, 1969. The period can be characterized as marking time in preparation for an about face. Forty-seven ground combat operations were recorded during this period, the following being the most important:

- (1) Operation NAPOLEON in the Dong Ha area initiated previously (1967) by Marine units, terminated on 9 December 1968.
- (2) Operation WHEELER WALLOWA by 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division and 196th Infantry Brigade (Light) in north-central Quan Tin Province. This ended on 11 November.
- (3) Operation MACARTHUR initiated by 4th U.S. Infantry Division in II Corps tactical zone terminated on 31 January 1969.
- (4) Operation COCHISE GREEN conducted by the 173d Airborne Brigade in Binh Dinh Province.
- (5) Operation TOAN THANG II consisted of ground operations throughout III CTZ. This was a multi-division operation involving allied forces.
- (6) Operation SEA LORDS was a coast and riverine operation. On 6 December Operation GIANT SLINGSHOT was started to disrupt enemy infiltration of materials from the "Parrot's Beak" area of Cambodia. Air operations continued to be important with over 60,000 sorties flown.

TET 69/COUNTEROFFENSIVE, 1969

TET 69/COUNTEROFFENSIVE, 1969

Tet 69/Counteroffensive, 23 February 1969 – 8 June 1969. From Tet 1969 through the month of June, the enemy again tried to sustain an offensive. His inability to do so can be largely attributed to aggressive allied ground operations. Between 23 February and 8 June 1969, a total of 70 significant named ground operations were terminated resulting in heavy enemy loss of life and materiel. The main operations concluded during this period were:

- (1) The 3d Marine Division's Operation KENTUCKY aimed at preventing enemy infiltration through the Demilitarized Zone in central Quang Tri Province. Throughout the early part of January 1969, Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army forces continued to avoid major contacts with Free World Forces. Their continual movement to avoid friendly forces or to search for food and supplies contributed to a decrease in the enemy-initiated ground attacks and attacks-by-fire in Quang Tri Province.
- (2) Operation NEVADA EAGLE, initiated on 17 May 1968 in Thua Thien Province, continued in 1969 as the U.S. 101st Airborne Division continued to defeat enemy personnel, and capture rice

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

caches, material, and installations within its large area of operations, where it undertook offensive sweeps along Route 547 and around Song Bo.

(3) Two battalions of the 4th Marine Regiment were engaged in Operation SCOTLAND II. Initiated on 15 April 1968, this multi-battalion search and clear operation was centered in and around Khe Sanh.

(4) The IV Corps Tactical Zone Dry Weather Campaign began on 1 December 1968 in support of the overall mission to prevent Viet Cong units from interfering with pacification efforts. This operation, "Speedy Express," interdicted lines of enemy communication and denied him the use of base areas. In 1969 the 1st Brigade, 9th U.S. Infantry Division continued the operation in Dinh Tuong Province, using its highly successful night ambush tactics while the 2d Brigade continued its mission with the Mobile Riverine Force. Although engagements in Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS were typically small, the 9th Infantry Division fought several sizeable engagements with impressive results.

On 23 February U.S. Navy units and installations at Da Nang, Tan An, Ben Luc, Go Dan Ha, and Tra Cu came under numerous and widespread attacks associated with a new enemy offensive, but since many units in these areas were poised to meet these attacks they caused only minimal damage. April saw the heaviest cumulative enemy activity in the barrier interdiction campaign to date.



VIETNAM SUMMER-FALL 1969

Summer-Fall 1969, 9 June 1969 – 31 October 1969. During the summer and fall of 1969, conduct of operations was increasingly turned over to Vietnamese, US troops withdrew in greater numbers amid reaffirmations of support for the Republic of South Vietnam government. President Nixon announced the reduction of the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam which would be demonstrated initially by the withdrawal of 25,000 troops by 31 August 1969.

American troop strength had peaked at 543,400 in April 1969 but dropped to 505,500 by mid October. More scattered than before, enemy attacks were concentrated on South Vietnamese positions. U.S. combat deaths were down in the early fall as American units switched to small unit actions. The trend was not constant, however, because U.S. troops deaths which had fallen well below 100 a week in the fall, rose above 100 later in the year.

Appendix – C

Leadership Changes in Vietnam

Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery

Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Cundiff to Lieutenant Colonel Glenn D. Spradlin 24 April 1969.

Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery

Major John Tilley to Captain Robert W. Custer 20 February 1969

Service Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery

Major Julius L. Berthold to Captain Garland L. Henderson 1 February 1969
Major Garland L. Henderson to Captain Ronald J. Talarico 18 March 1969

A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery

Captain Gerald J. Wilhoite to Captain Clarence E. Kirk, Jr. 4 December 1968

B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery

Captain James W. O’Keefe to Captain Roye S. Wilson 1 March 1969

C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery

Captain Samuel T. McClure to Captain Lyle J. Thompson 4 December 1968
Captain Lyle J. Thompson to Captain Charles H. Harbin 6 March 1969

Appendix – D

Individual Awards and Decorations

During the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery's tour of duty in Vietnam each soldier received the National Defense Service Medal (NDSM), Vietnam Service Medal (VSM), and The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. In addition the battalion awarded the following medals to individual soldiers:

Silver Star:	1
Distinguished Flying Cross:	2
Bronze Star with "V" device:	11
Bronze Star:	23
Purple Heart Medal:	46
Air Medal with "V" device:	4
Air Medal:	8
Army Commendation Medal with "V" device:	8
Army Commendation Medal:	33

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, XXIV CORPS
APO San Francisco 96308

207

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 1514

9 September 1969

AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR

TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

COFFEY, RODGER D [REDACTED] SP4 HQ, 2d Bn, 138th Arty, APO 96308

Awarded: Silver Star

Date action: 19 June 1969

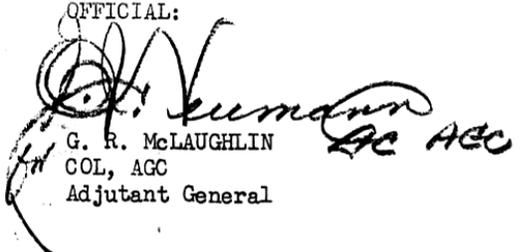
Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For gallantry in action while engaged in military operations against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam. Specialist Coffey distinguished himself on 19 June 1969 while serving as battery medic at a fire support base. During the early morning hours a large enemy force breached the perimeter of the battery. A fierce ground attack ensued, quickly resulting in wounds to Specialist Coffey in the legs and in one hand. He hurriedly stopped the bleeding and hobbled to the fire direction center where the wounded had been carried. Throughout the attack he constantly administered aid to the injured, completely disregarding his own wounds. When helicopters arrived to evacuate the wounded, he instructed personnel in the proper loading of the injured by priority. Only after he had assured himself that all other injured men had been evacuated and instructions given for resupply of medical supplies did he board the evacuation helicopter. Specialist Coffey's extraordinary heroism and selflessness were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President of the United States under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 9 July 1918

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:


G. R. McLAUGHLIN
COL, AGC
Adjutant General

W. E. SHEDD
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Staff

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

FOR SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES

I extend to you my personal thanks and the sincere appreciation of a grateful nation for your contribution of honorable service to our country. You have helped maintain the security of the nation during a critical time in its history with a devotion to duty and a spirit of sacrifice in keeping with the proud tradition of the military service.

I trust that in the coming years you will maintain an active interest in the Armed Forces and the purpose for which you served.

My best wishes to you for happiness and success in the future.

Richard Nixon

COMMANDER IN CHIEF



Republic of Vietnam Service Medal



On 21 August 1964, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) requested that The Institute of Heraldry provide proposed designs for the possible adoption of a Vietnam Service Medal. Proposed designs were submitted to DCSPER on 29 September 1964. The Vietnam Service Medal was established by Executive Order 11231, dated 8 July 1965. The design approved by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 12 July 1965, and the policy for award was promulgated by DOD Directive 1348.15, dated 1 October 1965.

The design, created by Miss Mercedes Lee, includes bamboo trees which are adapted from the flag of the President of Vietnam and the half-concealed dragon represents the subversive nature of the conflict. The crossbow, on the reverse, is the ancient weapon of Vietnam and the torch of the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of the United States devotion to liberty and freedom. The yellow ribbon with three vertical red stripes suggests the color of the flag of the Republic of Vietnam. The green border on each side alludes to the jungle of that Country.

2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery soldiers receiving the Vietnam Service Medal are authorized to wear a bronze star to indicate each campaign, which the battalion received credit: Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase IV 1968, Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase V 1968, Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase VI 1968-1969, Tet 69 Counteroffensive 1969, Vietnam Summer-Fall 1969.

On a Bronze medal, an oriental dragon behind a grove of bamboo trees above the inscription "REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM SERVICE." On the reverse, a crossbow surmounted by a torch above the arched inscription "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA". The ribbon consists of the following stripes: Primitive Green, Air Force Yellow, Old Glory Red, Air Force Yellow; center Old Glory Red, Air Force Yellow, Old Glory Red, Air Force Yellow, and Primitive Green.

Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal



The Secretary of Defense approved a request for approval of foreign awards to US Military personnel on 7 February 1966. As a result of this approval, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with device bar (1960-) was awarded to US Armed Forces personnel by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam per Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Order No. 48, dated 24 March 1966. The acceptance, criteria and description was announced in the Federal Register, Volume 31, No. 147, 30 July 1966 (Title 32, Code of Federal Regulation 47). Since the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal is a foreign award, it is not issued by the United States Government. The medal may be purchased from commercial sources.

A Gold six pointed star with rays, superimposed by a White enameled star, overall in center a Green disc, with the outline of the Vietnamese Country with a Red flame of three rays between North and South Vietnam. On the reverse of the medal is a circle with a designation band containing the word "CHIEN-DICH" (Campaign) at the top and "BOI-TINH" (Medal) at the bottom. Across the center of the circle is the word "VIET-NAM". The ribbon consists of the

following stripes: Gherkin Green, White, Gherkin Green, White, Gherkin Green, White, Gherkin Green.

Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm



The Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross was established by the Vietnam Government by Decree No. 74-b/Qt, dated 15 August 1950 and Decree No. 96/DQT/HC, dated 2 May 1952. Authorization for all U.S. Army personnel was confirmed in HDQA General Orders No. 8, dated 19 March 1974.

A Gold color medal, consisting of a wreath superimposed by two crossed scimitars saltirewise and a Maltese cross. In the center of the Maltese cross a disc with an outline of the country of Vietnam between two palm sprigs joined at the bottom and a scroll overall inscribed "QUOC-GIA LAO-TUONG" (Reward of the State). The ribbon consists of the following stripes: Old Glory Red; center Golden Yellow with 16 strands of Old Glory Red; and Old Glory Red.

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

DISPOSITION FORM

(AR 340-15)

REFERENCE OR OFFICE SYMBOL

LVII-AG

SUBJECT

Award of RVN Cross of Gallantry, with Palm, as a Unit Award

TO
Commanding Officer
2d Bn, 138th Arty

FROM
HQ, XXIV Corps

DATE
26 June 1969 CMTI

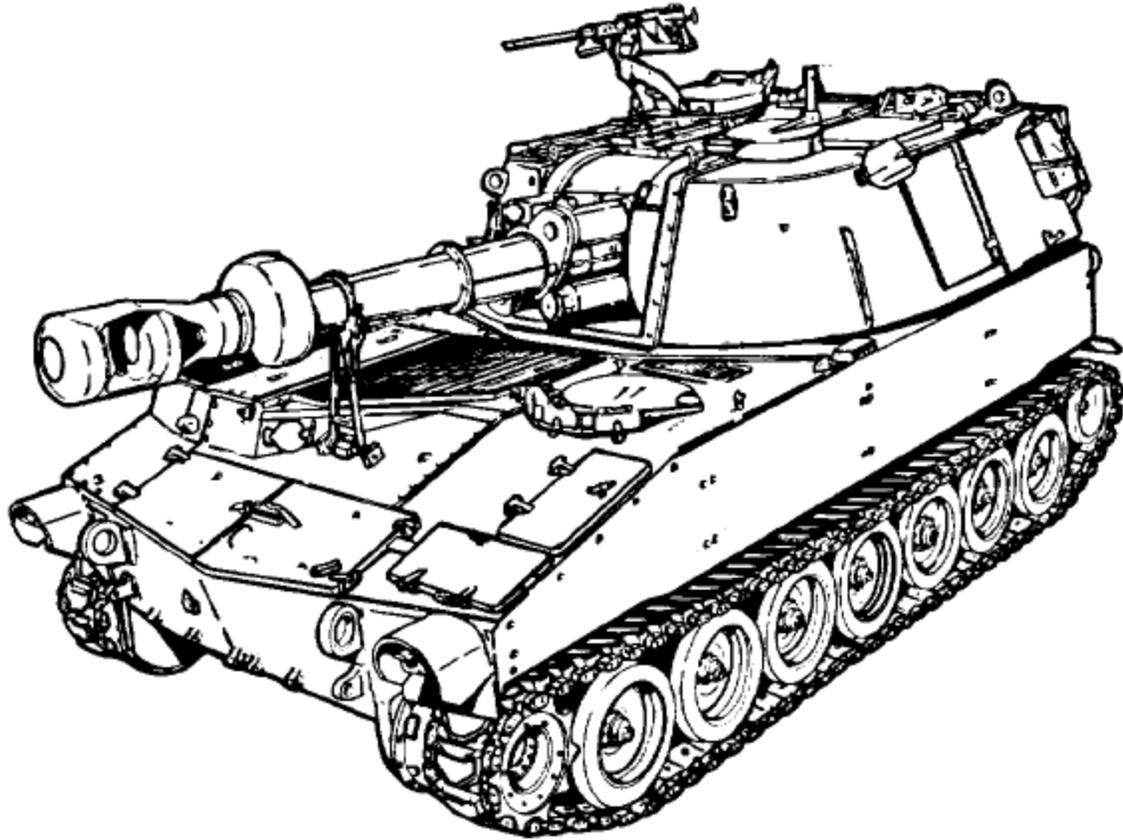
1. Above individual is tentatively authorized the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, with palm, awarded by the Republic of Vietnam to the III Marine Amphibious Force and all units ADFOR and OPCON to that headquarters during 1 January 1968 through 15 December 1968 in the Republic of Vietnam.
2. All individuals assigned to Hq XXIV Corps or to a unit assigned thereto for any portion of the period indicated above are entitled to wear the award on a permanent basis. The individual named above was assigned to an appropriate unit during the proscribed period.
3. Temporary entry has been made on individual's DA Form 20/66 pending Department of the Army approval. Request appropriate custodian of these records cause a permanent entry to be made upon publication and receipt of final authority.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

S/G. R. McLaughlin
G. R. McLAUGHLIN
COL, AGC
Adjutant General

Appendix – E

The M109 Howitzer



The M109 Howitzer was the medium variant of a U.S. program to adopt a common chassis for its self-propelled artillery units. The light version, the M108 Howitzer, was phased out during the Vietnam War, and many were rebuilt as M109s. The M109 saw its combat debut during the Vietnam War. First produced in 1963, with 155 mm M126/A1 gun in the M127 Howitzer Mount, 28 rounds of 155 mm were carried. Also armed with a .50cal M2HB “Ma Deuce” machine gun mounted, and 500 rounds of .50cal ammunition. It is recognized by its distinctive short gun tube with double baffle muzzle brake, 7 evenly spaced road wheels with low front sprocket and idler wheel, and large boxy turret mounted rear of center.

Glossary:

ABN	Airborne
ARTY	Artillery
ARVN	Army, Republic of Vietnam
BDE	Brigade
BN	Battalion
DIV	Division
DMV	Demilitarized zone
FSB	Fire Support Base
HOW	Howitzer
LST	Landing ship, tank
LZ	Landing zone
III MAF	III Marine Amphibious Force
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
RPG	Rocket propelled grenade
TF	Task Force
TOC	Tactical operations center
UH-1H	Utility helicopter "Huey"
USARV	United States Army, Vietnam
USMC	United States Marine Corps
VC	Viet Cong
VN	Vietnamese

U.S. Army Enlisted Ranks:

CPL – Corporal (E4)
MSG – Master Sergeant (E8)
PV1 – Private (E1)
PV2 – Private
PFC – Private First Class (E3)
SFC – Sergeant First Class (E7)
SGM – Sergeant Major (E9)
SGT – Sergeant (E5)
SP4 – Specialist Four (E4)
SP5 – Specialist Five (E5)
SP6 – Specialist Six (E6)
SSG – Staff Sergeant (E6)
1SG – First Sergeant (E8)

U. S. Army Officer Ranks:

CPT – Captain (03)
LTC – Lieutenant Colonel (05)
MAJ – Major (04)
1LT – First Lieutenant (02)
2LT – Second Lieutenant (01)

U. S. Army Warrant Officer Ranks:

KENTUCKY THUNDER IN VIETNAM

CW2 – Chief Warrant Officer Two (WO2)

CW3 – Chief Warrant Officer Three (WO3)

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